

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Masaru "Pundy" Yokouchi

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Masaru Yokouchi was born in 1925 above the small bakery his parents owned in Wailuku, Maui. His nickname, Pundy, comes from the Portuguese name for sweet bread, *pao duce*. After graduating from Baldwin High School, Yokouchi attended business school for one year before being inducted into the army. He later worked in the family bakery and eventually started his own business, Valley Isle Realty.

Yokouchi's involvement in Democratic politics began in 1954, and when John Burns was elected governor of Hawai'i in 1962, Yokouchi became his unofficial representative on Maui. Burns later named Yokouchi chairman of the newly created State Foundation on Culture and the Arts [SFCA] in 1966, a position Yokouchi held until 1978. In 1984, Yokouchi was reappointed to the SFCA board by Governor George Ariyoshi.

Today, Yokouchi continues to run his own realty business and serve on the SFCA board. In addition, he is the driving force behind the development of the Maui Community Arts and Cultural Center.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masaru "Pundy" Yokouchi (MY)

July 16, 1990

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Masaru "Pundy" Yokouchi in his Maui offices on July 16, 1990. The interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Joe Rossi.

To begin with, maybe you could tell us when and where you were born.

MY: I was born in Wailuku [Maui], above a bakery store—store and bakery—by a midwife. But that was a long time ago. (Chuckles)

JR: What year was that?

MY: Nineteen twenty-five.

JR: And what did your parents do at that time?

MY: My dad had this store, bakery. It's a tiny bakery in a store, basically. And my mother worked in there, also. They formerly came from the plantation. And [on the plantation] they had what they called this *tanomoshi*, which is like a [collective] banking system the Japanese had where you bid for money and you invest that money. And they had a group that my dad had to co-sign for everybody. This was a crop, a pineapple crop, that he invested in. They got wiped out in (a severe) storm. So, a couple of people came disabled. One committed suicide. The other one had a mental breakdown. So (my dad) had to assume their loan. And with the kind of pay they had at the plantation, he (could) never pay it back. So the *tanomoshi* loaned him an additional \$2,000 to buy this store in Wailuku. And that's how they came (here). And I was the only child born after they moved to the store.

JR: So using the store, then they'd be able to earn money to . . .

MY: Repay that loan.

JR: . . . repay back the loan. And what about school?

MY: School---I just went to Baldwin High School. I went to Cannon's School of Business

one year and got inducted in the army. And then came back and never continued my education.

JR: Is this during World War II or . . .

MY: Mm hmm, World War II.

JR: Did you leave the islands, go overseas?

MY: No. We were stationed in Schofield [Barracks]. We were in the interpreters group, and we volunteered for the infantry, hoping we could go overseas. Then the following month, they accepted our transfer. And then the following month they (started training) the infantry in Schofield and sent the interpreters to Minneapolis. So, (chuckles) we cut our own throat.

JR: I know that early on you had a strong interest in sports.

MY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

JR: What about the arts?

MY: Well, like a lot of kids I dabbled in the arts, I mean painting. I used to like it, but that was just a pastime with me, not really involved in any serious way. But sports was our main interest, you know. We grew up---Hawai'i used to have a structure where the plantations used to have all these different leagues. The 105-pound league, 115-pound league, 125-pound league, 140-pound league, and a barrel weight after that. You play by weights, you know. Sports was very important to everybody in Hawai'i. Mainly my interest was always in sports. So going to school, I participated in sports.

JR: Any kind of sports?

MY: Yeah, well basically football, baseball—not baseball—basketball, baseball later. But when I was young, from about eleven years old to about fourteen, I was in this swimming team, the Three Years Swimming Club by Soichi Sakamoto.

JR: Coach?

MY: Coach Sakamoto. We used to spend every single day swimming. So later on when (we) went to high school, (we) then got involved in a more formal (team) sports like football, basketball.

JR: Was it common for kids to have dabbled in the arts? I mean, you were obviously involved in a lot of sports, but were you aware of other kids, maybe, who were more involved in the arts? Is this through school?

MY: No. Baldwin was very---Baldwin High School was very typical of the kind of community high school that existed those days. And art was probably the last

thing anybody thought about, and even the educators, you know. They used to have elective classes in art, and I took visual arts while I was in high school. But that's all elective, nothing really compulsory. Last time I remember any formal kind of class where it wasn't elective was in my eighth grade, where we had music appreciation. And prior to that, was in my kindergarten years. But in between, nothing was really, really programmed, you know, in the arts.

MK: You know, you mentioned that in the old days, like the plantation would sponsor some sports teams. And sometimes even some plantations had recreational facilities for the kids, yeah?

MY: Mm hmm.

MK: Did the plantations in any way support the arts, like music or the visual arts or performing arts for the plantation, like maybe bringing in entertainers or anything like that?

MY: Not that I remember. One of my buddies that helped me in my Maui Community Arts and Cultural Center [MCACC] drive is Johnny Baldwin. And he's the grandson of Frank Baldwin, who's the son of Henry Perrine Baldwin that actually is responsible for A & B [Alexander & Baldwin, Ltd.]. And his father was Asa Fred Baldwin, who was a top man, at that time, among the plantation system. He [i.e., Johnny Baldwin] gave a speech once. He's a very unassuming, very, very shy guy, Johnny Baldwin. We had a kick-off dinner [for MCACC fundraising], and he mentioned that his only exposure to culture was the old Hāmākua Poko Theater. This is already an abandoned camp. He used to live up in the upper district, so he said they used to go to the theater. And every time when they (had) to change film—they had only one projector, so they (had) to change film. So what he remembered the most about—that was the closest to culture, going to the movie theater, and they used to bring their BB gun and shoot the rats on the rafters when the lights go back on. (Chuckles) Son of this, you know, pioneer [i.e., A. F. Baldwin], that's his limitation to the arts. So I don't think the plantation did anything that way.

JR: What about in your home? Did your parents have any interest in the arts that you were aware of?

MY: Not really. My older brother, second brother, used to dabble in painting and drawing. I used to marvel at the way he used to draw. And that's where I kind of picked it up. But beyond that, really nothing because. . . .

My eldest sister was married to an artist, a Japanese artist that was here. And after one week, she left the guy. In the old days, a lady don't walk away from the husband, especially (in the) Japanese culture. But she did it, and my parents supported her move. And they had the marriage annulled. And my mother always (told) me when I used to draw at home, "Don't be an artist. It's a horrible profession. Plus, they cannot make a decent living, and they have a different kind of world." Even at that time. That's why my sister walked out from this guy.

(Chuckles) So, I wasn't encouraged in the arts (so to say).

JR: You were encouraged, then, to go into the family business.

MY: Mm hmm. Yeah.

JR: And what about politics? I know you got---somewhere along there you got involved in politics.

MY: Yeah, well, as Michiko just mentioned that I used to be active in sports, and especially when I came back from the army. I used to coach all kinds of leagues. And I used to be (a) serious coach, you know. You never (got) paid those days. But I used to love that. I used to coach some of the age leagues. Then I helped coach the Baldwin High School football team as an assistant coach. Then I coached the baseball teams—the AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] and also what we called a senior league, which is a top league of mixed races, a really open league. And we were pretty successful. In fact, one year [1956] in the exhibition game we played against the Los Angeles Dodgers [then the Brooklyn Dodgers]. They beat us, naturally, but it wasn't a wipeout. It was eight [to] nothing. And that was the real famous, legendary team actually. They had Jackie Robinson, Pee Wee Reese. The pitcher was Don Drysdale. His first game for the Dodgers, in fact. They just tried him out. Roy Campanella, Gil Hodges, Duke Snider, Carl Furillo. They had a super team. And our boys played very well. It was a errorless ball game. We took our baseball very seriously those days.

JR: They were here or you were in L.A. or . . .

MY: No, no, they came through Maui going to Japan, after the World Series. They lost the World Series to the Yankees. And on the way to Japan, they stopped over Maui to play one game. So we had a Maui all-star game. Basically, it was our team that formed the team. And so they played that game during a Maui county fair, which is a big event on Maui, you know, October.

JR: And through sports then you met some political . . .

MY: No. [Nadao] Yoshinaga came back from school. He was a lawyer. And then in 1954, that's when (we) had this political revolution. And he was one of them that was really, really excited about (this) opportunity, so he called some of friends, and I was one of 'em. He told me that he's just back and he's really not that familiar with the community yet. He needed people that knew the community. So he enlisted our help. And those days I had no interest in politics. But as a friend, and what he told me about some of the inequities that need to be adjusted, he impressed me (as a) guy (who) had a purpose. So I started campaigning in 1954 with the rest of the boys. And that's how I got involved. And it was basically because I was so involved with sports, I knew a lot of people. And politics, that's part of the game, too. You have to know certain communities, who to contact, things like that.

MK: So in the beginning, what form of—what form did your involvement take in those early years? What was your role?

MY: I used to go house to house, pass card, you know, like the rest of the people. I used to help Yoshinaga structure certain communities (with) certain leaders who (were) not involved in politics, but we talked them into getting involved. There were a whole bunch of new people involved in politics in 1954, you know. They weren't basically fired up by the opportunity that things could be changed, but they were all basically friends. The friends will listen to friends kind of thing. And then Yoshinaga was a very, very intensive guy, you know. His belief---there's no question what he believes in. So he's very impressive when he sits down and talk to you. He had a real mission those days, too. In fact, he revolutionized a lot of our labor laws, where after a few years, many, many states used to just come to Hawai'i just to study our labor laws. And there's a strange (twist). This guy was a merchant's son. He wasn't a laborer's son, you know. But he was totally dedicated to the laboring group, because of the inequities (of) those days.

MK: And then when and how did you get acquainted with Governor John Burns?

MY: Burns was the leader at that time, restruct[uring] the Democratic party. He was always our great White father, you know. And so he used to come to Maui, naturally, and we used to meet with him. And I didn't get directly involved with him—to the extent I [eventually] did—until 1962, when he got elected (as governor). I used to be a part of his campaign, but I never headed his campaign. But in 1962, the Maui campaign, I headed his campaign. And so that's when we got real, real close, you know, because I had to deal with him and his people all the time, whereas I used to always play a secondary role before. So [prior to 1962], I never was in direct touch with him as much as some of my other friends. From '62, once he got elected, then beyond that—what he did later on (was to) name a representative on every island, neighbor island, you know. And they were actually employees of the governor's office. But Maui, he didn't pick anybody, because I had my own business started, and no way was I going to accept that job. So he said, "We'll just keep Pundy as an unofficial aide," kind of thing. So I was doing some of his goferring work without pay. That's when I got real close to him, because I had to report to him constantly on different matters. And, you know, it was more than the usual campaign-people-that-know-the-candidate kind of thing, because [I was] unofficial[ly] representing him, you know. So that's when we got real close.

JR: You were sort of his right-hand man on Maui . . .

MY: Mm hmm.

JR: . . . at that time. Were you ever encouraged to run for office yourself or . . .

MY: No. Well, in the back of your mind, because you're campaigning for so many people, you always have that thought. But when the time came to do anything, I never really seriously thought about it. You know, it's just a whim thing. "Gee, it'd be great if I'm a senator," or "Great if I'm a councilman," or whatever. But I never sat

down and thought, "Gee, should I run or shouldn't I?" I never even came to that point.

JR: Do you think your business, your realty business [Valley Isle Realty], had anything to do with that?

MY: Yeah. I think, basically, I grew up in a small store. And when I was in the seventh grade, we used to have this Wailuku High and Intermediate School, a combined school. And we used to have shifts where the older kids would go there early and then the younger ones would go a little later. And then some of my friends, the older ones, the high school kids, asked me to bring some custard pie for them—those days, it used to be a small pie for a nickel, you know—so I brought a few. And then the next thing, the orders started growing. And then my brother had to take me down with (our) bakery truck. We had about two—the highest order was about 200 pies a day. So my mind was always in business, you know, even when I was a seventh-grader. I always thought about business.

I guess you feel really proud that you elected certain people and they did certain things. So it's almost like a reflection of what they did that you take pride in. So I always felt good about my role in politics, that we elected some very good people. Many times you think, gee whiz, you know, the issues come up and you'd like to dive in yourself. So you get tempted. "Gee, if I'm sitting there, this is what I would do." You know what I mean? But I never really seriously thought that maybe I should do it. You know what I mean? I always felt that reflection of that—whatever deeds that my friends did—was enough for me.

JR: Do you remember when you first heard about any mention of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts or even the government getting involved in the area of arts?

MY: Yeah. You got a lot of tapes? Okay. Let me give you a long story, because it need to be said how I got involved. I walked in the governor's office one day, and I had a short report to make to him. And when I walked in, Mary Isa, his secretary, in this open door said, "Oh, here comes your chairman." So I just walked in. She was smiling.

I walked in, the governor said, "Well, welcome chairman."

I said, "Oh, what's this chairman bit? What are you talking about?"

He said, "Oh, well you see I got this (form) right in front of me. I'm signing it. I'm sending it to the National Council [on] the Arts and naming you as the chairman for the State Foundation (on) Culture and the Arts."

I had no involvement in the arts whatsoever, you know, so I said, "Okay, what's the joke?"

He said, "Well this is not a joke, because next week you're going to Chicago,

representing the state in this first national conference.”

So I told him, “I still don’t get it.”

So he told me, “Well, you see this (act) here? It’s a National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities that was just created. Every state, in order to receive funds, (had) to name a council or a panel that (is) going to receive funds from the federal government. And the state foundation was just created (this) past session. And they’re gonna have a nine-member board. We have to name that board. And this is the first conference, national conference, so you’re going to go to Chicago.”

I told him, “You’re serious.”

He told me, “Naturally I’m serious.”

I said, “You’re out of your cotton-pickin’ mind.” I said, “You know, a job like this calls for some prestigious people in Hawai’i. And then somebody who can afford it, to begin with, because it takes a lot of time and personal funds. And I’m just a guy just straight out of the bakery—just started my real estate company—so I don’t have the contact, I don’t have the funds, I don’t have anything.”

Then he said, “Remember last year when we were campaigning on Maui. And we had coffee at your house, and I asked you, ‘What’s that painting on the wall?’ And then you explained to me it’s an abstract by Tadashi Sato. And then you felt that I was questioning the painting.”

(Kiddingly) I told him [in response] that, “A guy like you shouldn’t close your mind to art, because it’s as basic as education. And you’re the champion of education. And so if anything, you should involve the arts as part of your plan for education.”

And I gave him some examples, like when I grew up, my introduction to a formal institution of learning was through the kindergarten. And in those days, what they did with you was introduce you to this formal institution through the arts. You sing, you dance, you share storytelling, you paint. That’s all what you did the first year, no reading or arithmetic. That’s all, not like today’s kindergarten is, they start right off [with reading and arithmetic], you know. But my days, some genius figured to get this guy (started in) formal education, the best way was through the arts. So (then) they’d say, “Okay, you’re ready, so you go to the first grade,” then they introduce the alphabets and numbers to you. They (then) take it [i.e., art] away from you. I always questioned [that practice]. I (was) on the school advisory council at one point. I used to question the Department [of Education], “Why do you say (art is) so important? One genius figured this out, then another genius would say, ‘This guy is ready, so you don’t need that.’” I said, “I cannot understand this.”

I explained that to him [i.e., Burns]. And I told him that to me art and education is the same. It makes a person aware. And that’s what education’s all about. So whether you verbalize, or see, or hear, it’s the same thing. It’s all the same body.

So he said, "Didn't you tell me that, and that the common man is not exposed to the arts because of the institutions, the way we were structured. And as governor, I should do something about it."

"That was right."

"Do you believe in that?"

"Yeah."

"If you believe in that, now [do] you think you're a big shot or you're a commoner?"

"I'm a commoner."

So he said, "What better way can the people, the common people, identify with the arts than its chairman being (cut from the same cloth)?" So I ended up in Chicago (chuckles) in the middle of winter—snowing, you know. So that's how I got involved.

And the governor always supported us. Always. In any issue that came up he supported us, because he himself, just like myself, (wasn't) exposed to the arts. But we (felt) there's something there that need to be developed. So we had a kind of freedom in the state foundation that no other agency had, because we were under the umbrella of the governor at that time. The first four years was strictly a governor's appointment, no confirmation or anything. So we had that kind of support. Like Yoshinaga was [chairman of the senate] Ways and Means [Committee], and the kind of money we were asking for the arts—which was a first-time thing—they came through 100 percent for us. Not where they say, "What is this?" and they nickel and dime you. They gave us a real meaningful amount of money to work with. So even today, Hawai'i, per capita, leads the whole United States in appropriation for the arts. [In 1989, the state spent \$6.23 per person on the arts.] So I think that's great.

I think we're still far from what (art is) supposed to be, I (mean) universal involvement. And the best way (to accomplish this) is naturally through the Department of Education. They've got to incorporate the arts in a more meaningful way in their curriculum. One of the best examples I can give you, without trying to explain the value of the arts, is that the private schools—you take like Punahou [School] or whatever, you name it—they have program(s) for the arts. Their tuition (and cost) is naturally much more expensive than ours, you know, so they have to guard (their) money very, very jealously. Otherwise, (it) can be so easily wasted. But you look at all the top private schools, arts play a very important part. They spend much money on it. And you send your kid there, it costs you several thousand dollars to educate 'em per year. And yet, they see it's not a waste of (money), it's a valuable tool for them.

But our public schools don't do that, because it falls in the arena of public discussions. So it's easy to say we're weak in English, we're weak in math, we're

weak in science. But how do you explain you're weak in the arts, you know? It's all a very subjective thing. You know what I mean? You cannot put it down in black and white. So you start losing the battle all the time. But a private school, I'm sure they have their critics, too—the parents or whoever—but they're much, much more active in the arts than we are.

So, basically it's a long story, but that's how I got involved, because (of) that argument, you know. I explained to the governor, I said, "I don't know. I'm not an educator. I'm not involved in the arts. I don't know. But something's wrong, just by common sense you look at it. And I'm only arguing (from) a common sense angle." So he just grabbed me by the neck and shoved me in the state foundation. (Chuckles) I opened my mouth too much.

MK: You know, before we go on, I want to ask. . . . Yeah, how did a common man like you get a Tadashi Sato then? What got you to go get a Tadashi Sato?

MY: Yeah. You see, as I said, I dabbled myself, right? So, even though I'm active in other things, back of your mind the thing lingers. And the arts is like that. When you paint, you cannot just go paint and, you know, walk away and come back, slap some more paint. It's totally involved. You just get so absorbed [that] hours would just fly, you know. And I used to just feel real bad (on) days when I can't paint, and (when) it's nightfall. You know what I mean? So I guess things like that lingers. And then when I read this small article about this Maui boy (who) returned from New York [i.e., Sato], who's an artist, I ran out there one day and looked him up. He was painting. And I was his first customer on Maui. I had a check (at) that time—we were investing (in) real estate. I had a check for \$1,000. And at the bakery I probably was making about \$250 a month. That was a thousand dollars, like four months pay. (It) was a dividend from one of our investments. I blew the whole thousand dollars on Tadashi Sato. My wife cried when I came home. Instead of the check, I brought in these paintings, you know. So that's how that Sato was hanging on my house when Governor Burns came.

I guess once you get involved in art—my own experience—which I never pursued—helps me in many other things to discern what is right and what is wrong, maybe in the way of picking out things. If you get more involved in the arts, like music, for instance—which I never got involved—it develops a keenness in you, the awareness. Maybe I'm---this is an exaggeration, but you can identify what is right, what is wrong in many things because you develop a sensitivity that you may not develop if you're not exposed to those things. You take an ultra, ultra sensitive person, where that person—a man (who) is effeminate, so we look and think, "Oh." But let that person discern things for you, like your interior (design), for instance, or your clothes. That person got a sensitivity (to) do (things) that you (don't). But he has developed that.

And I think a lot of that exposure is because of what they see, their eyes get trained, so they can say, "That's good, that's bad art." And the only way you get that is just by seeing. You train your eye to see. You can spend months, you may still not see. But someday you're going to see it, right? And that is going to help

you in different things. Why do you take math when you don't even use math in your everyday life, right? But it structure(s) your brain in some order, right? It helps you in a way you cannot—noneducated like myself—cannot explain. But it helps you. And that's why math is required.

So again I go back to the same argument. That same genius, why can't he figure out that art can give you something, too. You know what I mean? So anyway, that's how we started (chuckles) with the governor and myself on this state foundation.

MK: Then another question I have is that you come from a business background. The time the governor appointed you, you were just out of the bakery, getting into your realty business, so there's a very practical, business side of you. And yet, there's this very art-orientated side of you. How do those two sides come together in you to—for you to tell the governor, "Oh, we need art in education"? Did they seem like, you know, different poles?

MY: Yeah. Maybe that's why I impressed him, too. Here I was a noninvolved person in the arts. If I was in the arts and argued about the arts, he'd go, "Oh, yeah, fine." Right? You know, everybody gonna speak up for their cause, right? But I wasn't involved and I spoke up for it. That's why, maybe, he was listening. And I told him about the common man, because—I just gave a speech the other night in Honolulu about the misconception of the value of the arts, just like education was at the turn of the century. It was a luxury. It was a gift if you go to school. As soon as you can handle yourself, you're expected to go work, not go to school, you know. But today, it's not only universal, it's mandatory. But that's how far education has come. But all these centuries—I don't know how far back you can go—it wasn't required. It was a privilege, right? But somehow we found out that education, in order to better this society, should be compulsory. So education is compulsory today. And I believe the arts (should be) the same thing.

It took us eons to understand how important education is. And (it's) taking us eons to understand how important art is. But every time you go back—archaeologists, for instance, they can basically conceive of a community way, way back—it was like this—because of a great, great treasure of knowledge through the arts. And they measure the society that (way). And yet we say we don't need the arts, in a formal way, I mean. I think it (should) be universal.

So anyway, I think part of that is because I come up from a bakery/store kind of (environment). And then I got involved in sports quite a bit. I was more noted for those things. I started my own realty company, you know. Then when I spoke up (to the governor) for the common man's need to get involved in the arts, he look(ed) at me not as a guy that has a vested interest. I was just arguing a point that made some sense.

JR: So a week after he told you, you were on a plane to Chicago. What happened there?

MY: You know, I played football. My first game, yeah, I was a sophomore. We played Lahainaluna [High School], who was the perennial champions, you know. (I played for) Baldwin High School, and I was a substitute. I went in. I was (an) end. Those days (we played) single wingback, so the biggest man on the opposing team is the tackle. And the end had to block the tackle. So I went in the huddle. When I came out of the huddle (I faced) this guy named Lawrence Young Sik. He was about--- maybe he was smaller than what I (thought) about him, because to me he was monstrous, but he was maybe 200 pounds. I was about 140 pounds. He had a beard in high school. He had a beard. And that wasn't a fad those days. It's a rare guy who has a beard, you know. And Lahainaluna was noted to play kids way beyond their eligibility maximum. And (when) I (came) up to the line of scrimmage, this guy, he didn't even move. He was kneeling down. He looked at me. . . . I'm going to leave out that French word he used, but he said, "What the 'f' you doing? What the 'f' you think you doing here, kid?" I was frightened, you know what I mean?

But when I went to Chicago, that [football experience] was nothing, you know. If ever I was frightened anytime in my life, that was in Chicago. Because here I am, I don't know anything about the arts, I don't know anybody in the arts, I don't know what it's all about. One week later, I walk into this conference of the arts (with) all (the) people who are involved, you know. We had I don't know how many hundred delegates there. And Fred Preis and I went there.

I'll tell you another story. I was crying (to a friend). I said, "What I going do in Chicago? This going be one big embarrassment."

So Tadashi Sato told me, "Ah, don't worry, Pundy. Think about the guy from North Dakota. If you think you don't know anything (and you're from the boondocks), think about the guy from North Dakota. He's worse than you."

I said, "Oh, maybe there's a guy like that."

So one night they had a dinner for us. And then after the dinner, they took us to the University of Chicago Experimental Theater. They had a play for us, just for the conferees and some special guests. Then this guy was calling my name. He said, "Oh, Mr. Yokouchi, Mr. Yokouchi." So I stopped, and he said, "Oh, I'm Bill Bailey from North Dakota." Oh, here's my friend. "You mind if I join you to (go to the) theater together?"

"Well, sure." So we went together.

(The play was) *Pedestrian in the Air* by Eugene Ionesco, who was a very, very advanced playwright. He does things in a symbolic, abstract way. And the curtain opens—they're speaking the English language and they lost me. I don't know what this whole thing (was about). I (didn't) know what they were saying. This guy, Bill Bailey, next to me was rolling in the aisle. (Chuckles) He caught everything, you know. And I thought, "Holy mackerel. Here's (the) guy from North Dakota. Oh, what am I doing here," kind (of thing), you know.

And then (we) had intermission, so we go out there. Senator Everett Dirksen from Illinois was there and several other prominent people. They see this guy, Bill Bailey, yeah? Dirksen walks over to say hello, you know, not this guy go over to see the senator. I thought, what the hell kind of guy is this? Later I found out he was a Chicagoan. (He) moved to North Dakota. He was the dean of fine arts at North Dakota University. I thought, wait till I get home and tell Tadashi Sato this. I said, "Good night!" What a "comfort" to find this guy. Of all the (comforting examples, he gave me this guy from) North Dakota. Holy mackerel. (He turned out to be the most) sophisticated guy, you know.

The whole trip I was frightened. I'm talking about frightened. When I think about this Lawrence Young Sik in front of me, it was nothing. He hit me a few times, and boom, you're back to earth. And you bang away the best you can, right? But how do you address that, you know? People come up to me, "Oh, you're from Hawai'i? Do you know the Twigg-Smiths?" and all that.

"Gee, I'm sorry. Who you talking about?" I don't know.

Every guy come up to me---Hawai'i is so special, they all come up to you. And they ask me about, "Oh, you know the [Honolulu] Academy [of Arts]?" Those days [the director] was, I think, was [Robert] Griffing. [The director at that time was actually James Foster, Jr.] And, you know, "How's he doing?"

"I don't know." Gee, that was embarrassing, you know.

JR: Maybe we could just stop for a second right here. I'm gonna turn the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JR: Do you remember what kinds of things people at that meeting in Chicago were talking about? What they were planning to do in their individual states, maybe, or what the topics of conversation were?

MY: Well, there were only a few states so advanced that they already had a program. Like Illinois had a very, very strong council. New York had a very strong council. North Carolina had a strong council. And these are the people that worked on the bill to create (the) National Foundation for the Arts and the Humanities. So, the governors of those states automatically named that council to represent the state. Whereas Hawai'i had no council, so the governor selected nine people. So these people had some program that are already ongoing, privately. So now, with the national funds, they can enlarge their program.

But basically, the whole conference was about whatever tentative kind of program that the National Endowment [for the Arts] (could create). They're trying to tell us

what they see in grants. What kind of grants, for instance, they would be more attracted to. And the kind of national program that they're going to try to create. They have basically two parts. The endowment gives funds directly, let's say, to the Honolulu Symphony, the New York Symphony. But they also give funds to the state of Hawai'i, (which) we disperse. So the bulk of their money goes to some of these direct grants. They create—for instance, if they need a regional theater or a regional symphony, they'll give 'em direct funds. Whereas every state will have some funds to augment their funds. So that was basically what they were trying to explain.

And the guy that really, really followed up on the bill to create the state foundation was Fred Preis. He was an employee already at that time for the Department of [Planning and Economic Development]. He was involved in the arts, so somehow they found Fred in the state department and they used him. So he was actively involved in this program. When I went to (Chicago), the governor asked me, "This guy Fred Preis is also involved, so maybe he can go with you." And from there we developed an understanding. Fred, definitely, was totally involved with the arts, so he naturally became the executive director.

And then at that conference, we were the original odd couple, because they looked for Hawaiians. They said, "Where's the Hawai'i delegation?" And they see this aristocratic-type Austrian, you know, and this other guy straight out of Tokyo. Gee, not the typical Hawaiian. You know what I mean? And that was the Hawaiian delegation, so I always refer to us as the original odd couple.

JR: Had you ever met Fred Preis prior to . . .

MY: No, no. So I learned a lot of things from Fred. And then I got involved in the politics of the arts in Hawai'i with Fred, because. . . . The advantage I had was they considered me, first, a political appointee. They said, "Who this guy? Holy mackerel, (are we) going to the dogs in Hawai'i?" But then, as we got involved, they found that my mind was empty, you know. So they started trusting me. "This guy, after all, he can be fed," you know. Whereas Fred was involved. He has, naturally, his friends. So when he talked to different groups, they'll react and resist. We had difficulty giving money in the beginning. They were afraid [of] the catches to the giving of that money—receiving of that money.

JR: Political?

MY: (Yes.) The arts were so afraid of getting in politics or being controlled by government. You know the freedom of an artist is (guarded pridefully). So they were afraid. And we used to go to this Green Turtle Restaurant every week. I used to fly from Maui and meet with this group. And (it) took us about six months before they finally understood there's no catch to this thing, that the state really want to help the arts. And our job is to see that these things are done in a fair and proper way.

But to the (group), Fred was already identified with (certain groups, although he

really wasn't). And I couldn't understand the resistance in the beginning. I'd say, "Why you guys grumbling? Why are they fighting?" Then I found out the internal politics of the arts.

So one thing was an advantage, that after they got to know me they said, "Eh, this guy, you know, he's a total blank, so we can deal with him." In a way, that was an advantage, that I came from nowhere kind, you know. So anyway . . .

MK: So the arts people saw you as being, maybe, more objective and not having any ties to any one particular . . .

MY: Yeah.

MK: . . . arts group, so they trusted you?

MY: Yeah. First they wanted to know my political motives, you know. Then later on, when they found out that there's no motive, except that, as I said, my purpose was to open the arts out to the common people, make it more universal. Not just the common people, I want to make it—I want to improve it and make it universal. And universal means everybody.

MK: How did you have to win them over? I mean, what did it take to get the support of these arts people?

MY: It took time, but we supported—for instance, we had a Governor's Conference [on Culture and the Arts] the same year [1966], which was very ambitious. They told us about the dying needs of certain arts, especially the Hawaiian arts. So in the beginning years, the state foundation spent a lot of funds and time on the Hawaiian arts and crafts, which I'm very proud of today. Because if we lose it in Hawai'i, we lose it, because there isn't any place in Polynesia that matches the Hawaiian arts. And Fred was one of those guys that talked to me about the importance of doing some of these things, because. . . .

One example was like, for instance, there was one professor [Samuel H. Elbert] at the University [of Hawai'i] that was trying to write, basically, a dictionary of (the) Hawaiian (language). And this is (in) 1966. And the guy was (aging), you know. So I said, "Holy mackerel." And like the ritual Hawaiian dance that you see all the kids do today. Only one exponent of the arts that lived at that time was Iolani Luahine, nobody else. That's how bad it was. So we had master classes. We had all kinds of stuff to recreate (and protect in various) areas, plus we started supporting the Department of Education, some of the specialists, to get the arts out (to the young people).

We got involved—and this is where I had a lot of resistance at the beginning—but we got involved with the Model Cities program. (It was the days when) the Model Cities program (was introduced) on the federal level. And the experiment was in Kalihi-Pālana and Wai'anae-Nānākuli. So I told 'em, "That's a social, economic concern? Why aren't we involved there, also, in the arts?"

(Fred cautioned me), "Oh, but we don't have that kind of funds."

I said, "Fred, why do you think I'm here? I'm here for the common man, right?"

He said, "Yeah, but I don't know if these people can accept this kind of program."

I said, "Well, what better experiment than there? That's really the common man, right?"

And the good thing about Fred (is), he told me, "Okay. If that's your program, let's see what we can do." We got involved (and Fred did a great job).

That's why Agnes Cope, people like Wendell Silva, even they came strong supporters of the state foundation. And to the extent---the success of our program was that it wasn't just spoon-fed to these people. In the end, they demanded art. They started creating their own councils. So they had the Wai'anae-Nānākuli council for the arts, Kalihi-Pālama council for the arts. I was the proudest at that time, when they said they're going to create those councils, you know, and make it not just a council or committee, but they're going to fund it, they're going to fight for their rights in the legislature and all that.

And that's the way I think the arts should be, where people gonna fight for it, demand it, not just think it's a present or a luxury, you know, the way it's been treated. (It's) like, if you (are) Kalihi-Pālama (and) you don't have schools, (you would) say, "Good night, we want schools. We demand schools," right? Now they demand art. So that, to me, was the success of that program. So, little by little, I think the word got out that, after all, the state foundation is for real.

And then one meeting, we had a seminar, I remember. I think (it) was at the 'Ilikai [Hotel]. We had a panel, and people were firing questions. And I was one of the panelists. This lady from Wai'alae-Kāhala got up and said, "I want to direct this question to Yokouchi."

So I said, "Oh, okay, fine."

She said, "Why are you spending so much money in Wai'anae-Nānākuli, Kalihi-Pālama, and all these other areas and nothing in Wai'alae-Kāhala. We've been discriminated against."

And then I thought, gee, it's working. You know what I mean? When a wealthy person demand now they've been left out. You know what I mean? But our message was we've got to make it universal. But by the same token, I said, "We've got to support the symphony. We've got to support the theaters and all these groups."

In fact, pardon the saying, but I was criticized by a couple of senators. "Eh Pundy, you're just another *Haole* lover. All you doing, helping these *Haoles*," you know, symphony and all that.

I said, "My only argument is that it's *Haole* dominated, because where are you? Where's the local guys? It's open to them." So I said, "You guys are condemning something. To me, that's unfair. You lucky these people are involved. And we're going to help 'em to survive." Because, you know, those days, it was real shaky, all these organizations. I said, "So don't brand it *Haole*. Happens (it) got a lot of *Haoles* there, but that's not the point. The symphony is for everybody. You hear *Haole* when you hear symphony or just music. You know what I mean?" So that quieted down some people.

But when this lady came out and said, "Why are you guys discriminating against us?" I thought, lady, you got a good argument there.

"But we [only] have so much funds, you know. We support things that we think, possibly, you can enjoy—the symphony and all that. But there's other area that need to be involved, like Wai'anae-Nānākuli. These people would never get involved in the arts if you don't thrust upon them things like this. Whereas you are involved by your own personal upbringing. (However) we don't want to neglect you, because we think we want to develop the arts to a certain level that you can enjoy, too. Maybe up to now you're dissatisfied with some of the performances and all that. And that's also our job to improve (things like) the symphony that you can enjoy (also). But for us to literally get to Wai'alaie-Kāhala and start a community program there," I said, "we don't have that kind of funds, so we (had) to choose."

So she kind of half understood, anyway. She didn't like it, (chuckles) but she kind of half understood. But that was a good point. So anyway. . . .

MK: You know that tie-in between SFCA and Model Cities, was that like your idea or whose?

MY: Yeah, basically mine. It started with me. I argued about---that's an opportunity to me, because they formally recognize these areas as a social, economically deprived. And I say education and the arts (are) all of those things. You go to a rich neighborhood, they're more exposed to the arts. You go to the poor neighborhood, "What's art? We got to eat bread first to survive." You know what I mean? You know you get a perennial argument, right? Man doesn't live by bread alone. But you try explain that to the poor people, right? You're gonna spend a million bucks in the arts, against a million bucks for food or shelter. They got to get first things first, right?

So I think that was my argument, that this is an opportunity for us to experiment along with that social, economic program. And people said, "Oh well, gee, Christ, what are we getting involved with?" But as we got involved, everybody got real enthusiastic about the idea.

MK: You know, in the beginning, was there any resistance from people who were more concerned about putting bread on the tables, rather than art in the homes, when you first brought up that idea?

MY: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I was criticized once by (a politician's supporter). I won't mention names. He's a good friend today. I was introduced to him by Walter Heen. And they were having lunch, so I stopped by and said hello. He said, "Oh, you the guy from the state foundation." He said, "I just came out of the Peace Corps, and I understand you guys are in the Model City areas."

I (said), "Yeah."

"What kind of exploitation is this," he tells me.

I said, "What do you mean by exploitation?"

"It's very obvious. You guys (are) in there for political reasons, trying to get these guys (to) think you (are) giving them something. Where the poor people—you're taking advantage of the situation by saying you're gonna give 'em arts and the fine things, when that's not needed. They have more important things they need."

So I said, "Oh yeah? How come you're an expert?"

He said, "Oh, I just came out of the Peace Corps. I worked with poor people. I know what is poor. And you guys are just exploiting 'em."

So I told him, "You just remember one thing I'm gonna tell you." I said, "The one problem you guys have is, you know what? You think you got all the answers. And you think you (are) the only good people. And the other side are bad people, and they don't have answers. That's your biggest mistake. (We have well-meaning people, too.) Remember what I'm telling you."

And when we had a campaign, same thing. He saw me one day. He told me, "Hey, Pundy, we're killing you guys."

So I said, "Remember what I told you before. You're gonna be surprised about the grass-roots support for the governor that is not shown in all your polls." And we won, you know. He and I are great friends today, but he was naturally suspicious about our involvement in this kind (of) area, the arts in a poor neighborhood. You know what I mean? But today he's one of our biggest supporters.

So [in] the beginning, the resistance wasn't (an) active resistance, it was kind of passive, but the suspicion was always there. "What are these guys trying to do?" You know what I mean?

MK: How about the reaction of the people themselves in those areas, Wai'anae and Kālihi-Pālama?

MY: The first time we introduced that, that was Fred's job. He naturally hit the kind of resistance where they said, "What you want to do with us?" They couldn't understand it. Took him some time to make them understand that we think this should be universal. And this is a good area to really, really start it up. They didn't

have any structure, so we had to introduce programs like that. You know when you get like a small play or whatever and hold it in their cafetorium or whatever, you know, little things like that. And we used to have visual arts program and stuff like that.

And then they formed a council [in each community]. We told them they need to form a council. They formed a council, and then the council just grew. They came stronger and stronger, where they had professionals like Wendell [Silva] working for them like that. In fact, one time the Kalihi-Pālama group helped us. The interpretation those days of the 1 percent law [i.e., Art in Public Places] was that you set aside 1 percent for buildings. So the stadium---when they built the Aloha Stadium, they said that's not a building. But Kalihi-Pālama [Culture and Arts Society] sued the state [in 1974], saying it is a home---it's a house, a house for sporting events. So we got the money for the 1 percent. So you (now) see all these works around the stadium. That's how active they were, these people, not only within their community but in their domain, because they feel the sports arena is the domain of the Kalihi-Pālama guy. Just like I grew up, you know, sports-minded, right? And that's the way you're gonna expose 'em through the arts, put 'em up wherever they are.

The 1 percent law is basically the principle of bringing the museum to the people, rather than the people to the museum. You place the object of art so they got to walk into it. You know what I mean? And what better place than a sporting arena? And Kalihi-Pālama. . . . We couldn't challenge our own comptroller, for instance, because we're under the comptroller. So they did it for us, you know.

JR: How did the SFCA determine the kinds of programs that they put into these areas, the Model Cities?

MY: A lot of that depended on the reaction from the people there. And the guy that really, really did a great job was Fred Preis. Fred---you know, the good and bad of the guy was he (was) a czar. And since I was on Maui, he had the freedom to be the czar. So a lot of things that ordinarily the chairman or the committee would decide, he would decide it. So in the end Fred Preis and the foundation was synonymous. But the guy was so devoted to the arts. The energy and the time he spent, we could never have done better with anybody else.

In fact, a couple of times it was mentioned to me that some of the politicians didn't like Fred. They wanted him out. So it was suggested to me that maybe we transfer Fred to another department. (I appealed to) the governor, "I know the man has faults like the rest of us, but with the good he does, he's far surpassed that. The little he irks people, you know, to me it's worth it. And that's the way we're gonna get things done."

So the governor said, "Okay. That's it. He stays." He was always supportive, you know. I'm talking about senators and all these people ringing his ears all the time.

But Fred didn't have the best way of communicating. With him, he said, "Oh, we're

gonna buy this relief sculpture."

And everybody look, "We don't like it."

He's gonna look at them, "You mean you don't like what I picked?" He can't understand it, how people can disagree with him. He's not arguing. He's not saying, "No, no, no. I'm the authority and that's it." Not that. He cannot understand how you can disagree with him. What I mean, truly, you know, that's Fred. That's why he had his way, because his arguments are so basic with him. It's not, "Oh, I'm gonna use my authority on stuff like that." He just cannot understand why people cannot agree with him or go along with him. He just cannot understand it. So he was a real czar, this guy. (Chuckles)

JR: You mentioned a couple of things I wanted to ask you about. One was the Green Turtle Restaurant. I think there were some meetings there. Could you tell us a little bit more about . . .

MY: Yeah. There were leaders in different segments of the arts, like music, visual arts, university, people like that—mostly university-oriented people. And we were trying to tell them that we need to structure a Hawai'i Council for the Arts, community councils, to receive some of these grants, plus all the existing art groups. And we had to design a program that can really make sense for us. And we called them to help us design these things. And there were a lot of resistance because they wanted to know what's the real purpose, the political purpose or the intra-art politics, not just the political political—that's identified with me—but I mean Fred Preis, you know, the intra-art political situation. What is he trying to garner from them, to the advantage of certain groups that he's identified with? And that took a long time, but these people understood that our effort was basically what we were saying. It was sincere. It wasn't any kind of other intentions or whatever.

JR: Was Preis identified with any . . .

MY: Yeah, he was identified more with the—certain visual arts groups. They had several groups those days. There were—I'm guessing, but I think there was about four visual arts group—the Windward Art[ists] Guild, the printmakers association [i.e., Honolulu Printmakers], I think the university represents one, some other group. About four groups, and I think he was identified with certain groups in there. I forgot which ones. But I know Helen Gilbert was one of the strong proponents for visual art. And she was strongly against Fred Preis. It took me months to understand this lady don't trust Fred. And finally when she understood that Fred had no other purpose but to advance the state program for the arts in the community, not just for the state, (she became one of our strongest supporters).

MK: You know, back in those days, before the SFCA got off the ground, what sort of support did any of these individual arts groups have from government?

MY: Basically none.

MK: None.

MY: Yeah. That was a completely new—that's why they were suspicious, you know. And because Fred was identified with certain groups, they were suspicious. "What is he trying to advance now?" There were really no funding at all from government.

MK: How about in terms of organization. Was there any sort of umbrella organization over any of these arts groups? Or were they all separate units?

MY: All separate. We created---see, what happened in most of the states, the leading states, they had a council for the arts, [an] existing private council for the arts. Like New York City, they took a lot of their members and created the New York City Council for—New York [State] Council [on] the Arts, which is the governmental side. But they still had a private one. So the private one became basically an advocacy group for the arts, and they helped the state council, also. But they're also independent, you know. We never did have that in Hawai'i. We created a state one first, so it's in reverse. We wanted to create the civilian one as a check and balance kind of thing. And they couldn't understand that, too. They said, "You know, what—are we trying to create another state agency?"

I said, "No, we're gonna keep that private. And then they can be an advocacy group. But meanwhile, also, like Kalihi-Pālama, they can be an advocate for the community, not just for the state."

Today---the Hawai'i Council for [Culture and] the Arts [created in 1974 and later renamed the Arts Council of Hawai'i] became defunct last year. They didn't see any real purpose, which I cannot blame them, too, because you have all these small groups. Like, for instance, [if] you belong to the symphony, [then] you belong to the symphony and you're gonna spend some time in the Hawai'i Council [for Culture and the Arts] as secondary to the symphony. So when the argument for the dollar comes, you're gonna argue for the symphony. Like if you're a visual arts person, you're fighting for the university or the academy of arts or whatever. Your interest in Hawai'i Council [for Culture and the Arts] becomes secondary. That's why it didn't really, really have a strong purpose. They were wrestling with this thing for years, and finally they just gave (it) up.

But the idea was---our idea at that time was that we need a strong civilian body to counteract the state. Otherwise, as these---a lot of people were suspicious of it [because it] might get too political, you know. And then the state agency might start doling dollars out in a political way, and that's the danger. But you have an advocacy group that's strong, that concentrates on what the state is doing, they can spell it out. "Eh, these guys are playing politics." You know what I mean? But fortunately in Hawai'i nothing like that ever happened, where they could accuse us of political dealings and dealing outs. You know what I mean? You know all these years you haven't had anything, eh? Because it never (did happen).

And that started with Burns, who said that we just got to do certain things, it may not be popular politically, but it's needed. We said, "That's it. Good."

JR: How about the community arts councils? How did those . . .

MY: Today they---like Kalihi-Pālama [Culture and Arts Society], they seek funds from the legislature, separately. And then the funding comes through our state foundation, but it's already earmarked for them. If they're going to have a quarter-of-a-million dollars, it just goes through us and it goes to them. So they're basically independent, you know.

MK: You know back in the those early days when Preis was the head and you were chairman, who were the commissioners that kind of left their mark? Who were the ones who were able to speak up and make suggestions and recommendations that had an effect on the development of SFCA in those early days?

MY: Not many. One of the reports we had from the Legislative Reference Bureau, they said---that Tanimoto's. . . .

JR: The auditor.

MY: Auditor. [House Resolution 647 of the 1975 legislative session requested a management audit of the SFCA. Legislative auditor Clinton Tanimura presented the report in March 1976.] The criticism [was] that a lot of members weren't really involved. They can see the domination. And that's true. I cannot argue against that. That's why I was trying to encourage that [i.e., open discussion], which is difficult when they feel intimidated, you know. But a few, like---what's her name? Kaulili, a Hawaiian . . .

JR: Alvina.

MY: Alvina [Kaulili]. She had an impact in the Hawaiian side because she was a sort of a resource for us. Eddie Tangen, you know he's a union guy [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union], so he kind of helped in the idea of spreading this in a universal way. Then we had quiet people, but they did so much, not in policy but in carrying out their area, like June Kanemitsu from Hilo. She was always very supportive of all the groups. She used to attend all these meetings in Hilo. And even when we have shows that were brought in, she used to go there and actually pick up the stick and stones kind, you know. In fact, one reappointment for her---there was criticism that her husband supported Tom Gill, and this was a fierce 1970 [gubernatorial] campaign, you know, [in which Gill opposed Burns]. So one day when the governor and I were discussing the list, he told me, "Oh, everybody want this lady out."

I said, "Oh." I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because (her) husband supported Gill. So some of the senators said they got other names they want to put in."

So I said, "Oh. Well, are the senators going to object?"

He said, "Well, that's what they're saying. They're asking me to replace her." So he told me, "What do you think about the lady?"

I said, "She's one of our best members as far as dedication. She's not a leader, but dedication—I can always call on her, and she'll do it."

So the governor said, "That's the answer. She stays."

So June was pretty good. We had Thelma Hadley from Kaua'i, and she was well respected. So at least whatever we wanted to institute in Kaua'i, at least she had that kind of reputation where people didn't feel that she had any devious ideas or anything like that. We had a couple problems with Kaua'i, like the Hanalei Art Festival. You ever heard of *Maybe Blue*?

MK: Yeah.

JR: A sore point.

MY: Yeah. [University of Hawai'i assistant professor of art James] Rosen painted that. That was just about the size of that panel, one panel there. [MY points to an area on the opposite wall that is approximately three feet tall and three feet wide.] And then I was working in the bakery on a Saturday, helping my brother, and I had this call from Fred Preis and [SFCA board member] Bill Ichinose. They said they want to pick up that painting, but it's going to be controversial. So I told 'em, "You guys picking it up because (it's) going be controversial or because you guys want the painting?"

He [i.e., Preis] said, "We want the painting."

"So what is it?"

He said, "It's almost like a blank wall."

"So?" I said, "Then why you want to pick that up?"

He said, "Because we think---we've been following this guy's work, and I think this is where he has gone. This is the farthest he'll go, then he'll start coming back from there, so we'd like to pick that."

So—Bill Ichinose used to be at the university, too—so I told [Fred], "Okay, put Bill on the phone." So I asked Bill, "You guys are looking at this in an honest way, not for controversy purpose? Do you really think this is an honest work and the guy would—not just a joke, you know?"

He said, "No, it's an honest effort. We know his work."

"Okay, pick it up."

So we paid all of \$600 for it. Then this reporter [Barbara Milz of the *Honolulu Advertiser*] saw that one day and said, "Ho, these people are buying the kind of junk with the state money." And front page [November 15, 1967] blasted us and then interviewed all these politicians. Everybody blasted that. And this went on for about a week. And finally the last person she interviewed was the governor. So (she) asked the governor, "What do you think about what the state doing, squandering the state money—I mean, the foundation doing squandering the state money?"

He said, "Oh, I don't know about squandering, but all I know is [that] we got good people there. And I know they're doing a fine job. And I trust them completely." So the controversy just died. (Chuckles)

But later on, they had this Hanalei Art Festival. [The festival actually took place in August 1967.] And then they asked Fred to find a juror. So he picked the painter. He used to be, I think, assistant—either associate or whatever—at the university in the art department—James Rosen. So he asked the guy. So he went over to jury the show—and this is an amateur show, you know. And then all they handed out were ribbons—grand prize, first prize, second, third, honorable mention. He didn't hand out one single ribbon. He said the whole show is unworthy of anything. They wanted to kill Fred Preis. [According to newspaper accounts, nine prizes were to be awarded but Rosen only authorized two, claiming the rest of the entries were not competent in a professional sense.]

So finally we had another program that we needed their support. They said over their dead body. They won't do it. And this, I think, was the Kaua'i council we wanted to form. They said over their dead body. They want nothing to do with the state foundation. So Fred came to see me one day. He said, "Pundy, you got to go to Kaua'i, because if I go there, they're going to tar and feather me. So you got to try and explain that program."

So I went over. Had forty-six mad women in there. But again, the fortunate [thing] about it was that, "Who you?" kind. You know what I mean?

"Oh, I'm the chairman."

"Oh, you're the chairman." But they're not involved with me, so they couldn't really blame me. They were blaming Fred, you know. So finally (they) quieted down, and then they agreed, "Okay." They'll support us, because, again, I was like an outsider, even though I'm the chairman.

But, ho, talk about repercussions. And boy, our fault. We bought the guy's painting, we got controversy. We hire the guy as a juror and. . . . But, you know, what that guy did was unforgivable. No ribbon, you know what I mean? "Gee," I said, "Fred, you know, if I had my way I'd throw that damn *Maybe Blue* in the ocean. That's just terrible. That's so arrogant of any man to (do) that. I don't care what kind of work it is, gotta get something decent in there. I don't care how much of an expert that man is. Because art [is] from the eyes of the viewer, that's all.

The three of us can go [and] we can have three different likes and dislikes, right? But this guy said nobody deserves a ribbon. "God," I said. Boy, I was so mad that time when I heard that. That's the ultimate in arrogance to me.

JR: I think we should stop right now.

MY: Yeah.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 20-2-1-90; SIDE ONE

JR: One of the things I wanted to ask you about was that first board. You mentioned some of the folks that were on it. Did you play any role in their selection? And what kind of qualifications were you looking for at that time?

MY: No, I didn't play any role in the selection of the other members. The governor's (friends), just by virtue of people who are his friends, suggest some. There was somebody (who) recommend somebody kind (of thing). There was no consistency in the board, which was good. So you didn't see---you didn't identify with the symphony, or the Bishop Museum, or the academy of arts. People came from---you wonder where these people came from kind. [It] was basically, I guess, contacts with the governor. A senator made a request to the governor, "Oh, put my friend on," stuff like that. Like Thelma Hadley was a librarian. June Kanemitsu was a housewife. Eddie Tangen came from the union. Alvina Kaulili was an educator. We had [actor] Richard Boone those days. You know, "Have gun, will travel." So that was the---again, somebody suggested to the governor. He thought, eh, that might be fun (to) get one actor on. Then who else we had?

JR: I think you had Reuel Denny.

MY: Oh, Reuel Denny was an author, poet. In fact, what was that book he got a real high critical acclaim [*The Lonely Crowd*]? So Reuel Denny represented the university, that literary side. Who else we had now?

JR: Cades. Charlotte Cades.

MY: Oh yeah, Charlotte Cades. Charlotte Cades, if you identify [anything] with her, would be the symphony, performing arts side, because her husband was not only a prominent attorney but he was first violinist with the symphony. Russell Cades, he was a great, great supporter for the arts. So her name came, basically, I think from that direction. Who else we had?

JR: Ichinose.

MY: Oh, Bill was---what was he now? Geophysicist at the university, but he also was a

ceramicist. So he was actively involved in some of the art groups.

JR: I wanted to ask you, also, about the Governor's Conference [on Culture and the Arts] that was held, I think, in '66. What kind of expectations did you folks have going in, and maybe how does that compare with the outcome?

MY: I think it was an ambitious program. January, February---just at the end of January [and the beginning of] February was the national conference. And Fred was talking about that governor's conference. I didn't know much about those things, so I told Fred, "Gee, can we do it?"

So he said, "Don't worry. I think we can." And he wanted to do that. And then we enlisted a lot of these national people to come down, help us look at things, and give their viewpoints. I think that was a really, really ambitious program to do so early, but I think the results were fantastic.

You know, like the Hawaiian arts, for instance. If it wasn't for that conference, it wouldn't have shook up a guy like myself. Fred knew some of these things already, but I didn't know. And report after report and statement after statement (demanded), "We've got to do this. We've got to do that." It's a total need. Nothing was done. The Hawaiian arts were submerged to the point where it wasn't there. When the missionaries came they introduced their own culture on them. And they [i.e., the Hawaiians] believed that, because even the kings and queens supported the Protestant movement. So everything became, basically, a WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] type of (culture), you know. So the Hawaiian arts got really, really submerged where—to the point where anything to do with Hawaiians was almost shameful. Even my background, we looked down on the Hawaiian people. They were really on the bottom of the totem pole.

So when these things were explained to us that. . . . I forget [who she was, but] one lady made a—to me, a very good statement. She said, "You know, if we lose these things, we cannot go to another part of the Pacific and recreate it, because they have their art form of their own. And then it's so basic to Hawai'i, it's a shame if (these) thing(s) disappear." So that really impressed me.

Our beginning here is [that] there are no group, Hawaiian group as such—a dance group, music group, any kind of group—formed. Nothing, you know. So the only group we could identify as Hawaiian was the Hawaiian Civic Club, which is a group of business people. They're social---basically, it's a social group. We had to beg them to take some money from us to start something. They said, "What?"

"Anything." That's how---everything was zero, you know. Then little by little we started working directly in getting somebody to work with Iolani Luahine, for instance, and Mary Pukui, and all these—Lokalia Montgomery—all these people. And they started coming up.

And one of the stroke of good luck was [that] Eddie Tangen had a friend that asked him to get the state to buy these paintings. He prevailed upon me to at least talk

to this guy. So I went to this guy one day. He told me that this guy is working at the University of Chicago, but he's doing his own research on the Hawaiian people. And his theory is that---nothing was written about the Hawaiians, but he had a theory that all these things happened from Tahiti, and they came over with these great sailing vessels and all that, (that) they were great seamen from way back. But he want(ed) to come back to Hawai'i, and the only means he can come back is by selling his paintings. So after I saw (and heard all this, I said), "We've got to buy that painting." So we bought Herb Kane's painting of the fourteen war canoes. We paid \$14,000. So with that money, he came back to Hawai'i. He's the creator of *Hōkū'lea* and all that, you know. [*Hōkū'lea* was the Polynesian canoe used by contemporary Hawaiians to trace the migration patterns of their ancestors.]

You had all different parts of it, but our foundation, I think, was the seed that started a lot of this stuff. Today, there's a great renaissance going on. Got guys fighting---the groups are so many now, they're fighting with each other now, which is great. They're so fierce in what they're doing. They believe in what they're doing. (When) we started, 1967, nobody---we couldn't even (give any money). We want to give the money, [but] there's no takers. That's how---where we started, was zero. Hawaiian Civic Club and those guys said, "What we going do with this money?" kind of thing. Really. And a lot of that was Fred. He's the guy that I really think (was responsible). His art is so universal. He can see the value of recreating the Hawaiian arts. Whereas you would think his background---Austrian and all that---he'd be more involved with European art, you know.

JR: Do you think people maybe misunderstood that about him?

MY: Oh yeah, sure. But Fred had a way---you know, like the way I said---when people disagree with him, he couldn't understand. "How come the guy can disagree with me?" kind. That's where you get problems sometimes. But it's that fierceness, though, is what makes him move and get things done.

Like my friend [Nadao] Yoshinaga is another good example. You love him or hate him, no more in between. Yoshinaga people---like I believe in Yoshinaga, you know. (If) he said, "Dive off that cliff," you dive off that cliff.

His opponents say, "This guy's insane."

That's the kind of guys they are. You know what I mean? They're so intense, but they get things done.

MK: You know, back in that governor's conference, would you remember who were the real advocates of the Hawaiian arts? You said like Alfred Preis and this woman. Would you remember the names of . . .

MY: No. They were all strangers to me. Like I was saying, I was new in it and---I'm not the type that tried to remember names and positions and all that. Even till today, I just take it as it come kind. But the message was very clear to me. That, to me, was an important part. And I just take it that these people were well-informed,

well-meaning people. We had a lot of the university people there, people that [were] really concerned. I don't know. I'm sure they were there, but I don't remember them as such.

MK: And then how about the other ethnic groups? Was there any stated needs for making, say, Okinawan culture, or Japanese culture, or local Samoan culture, or any other ethnic groups' culture and arts more public?

MY: They all came out, but not to the degree of the Hawaiian arts, because the Hawaiian arts wasn't proposed by the Hawaiians as such. Mostly *Haoles* were concerned about it. And later on we were criticized, you know. In fact, I was approached couple times. "Eh, you Japanese. What are you doing for the Japanese culture?"

I said, "Well, we get limited funds, so we're devoting mostly to those areas that it's really needed. But a Japanese cultural society at least exists. At least they're doing something. And because of their position in society, at least they have their own program, whatever little they may have. So rather than augment that, we need to devote to something that we really need to save and create."

Another group that we concentrated on was the Filipino group, because we have a lot of these immigrants here. And they're a very young generation. We (thought) that their culture has to be really developed, so they can really be proud of that.

The Okinawan group, too. A lot of the Japanese, Okinawan people, they're not outspoken, but they wish you'd do something. So they didn't come out directly, "Oh, we want this. We want that." But they said, "Oh, please support us." But I guess---again, like had this Okinawan school in Honolulu that Mrs. Nakasone runs. She's outstanding because she comes from a very famous family. So at least that art survived, is surviving. But there's no *Iolani Luahine* program.

We had the Bayanihan [Philippine Dance Company] come down. It was very impressive. And that really cheered the Filipino community. So we said we've got to do things like that. So we're trying to, more or less, support the weak ethnic groups first. And then, as we said, if the art is lost in Japanese, no problem. We just go to Tokyo. We can get it all back. You know what I mean? But Hawai'i, where do you go, huh? Tahiti is different. Even though they [i.e., Hawaiians] came from Tahiti, it's different, you know, the culture. I think if any one person I could say [was working] on the Hawaiian arts, it's Fred Preis. Because he was constantly with me on that and talking with me. He was really, really concerned. It was really fortunate to me.

JR: I wanted to get into the Art in State Buildings law and how that came about, the idea—maybe any involvement you had or things like that.

MY: Fred gave me the idea. He told me that the federal government have a law—one-fourth of 1 percent that's allowable for art. But he said (it's left to the decision) of the General Services Office. . . . So, for instance, if there's a \$100 million project,

\$250,000 could be spent for the arts. But it's not mandatory, whereas ours is mandatory, you know. So Fred told me, "It would be great if we [could] get some kind of a law like that."

I said, "Well, make it allowable or what?"

He said, "Well, if nothing else, allowable. But if we can make it mandatory, that would be great."

So I said, "Well, how much?"

He said, "I don't know."

"Half percent or what? Because we don't have that kind of . . ." Those days, especially, the expenditure wasn't that great, you know. So I said, "Well, what would be ideal?"

He said, "Well, we're talking the ideal, maybe 1-1/2 percent."

"Why 1-1/2 percent?"

"I don't know."

"Okay." So I tell him to go prepare the bill. I think either he or somebody else prepared the bill. And then we came to the showdown. The senate, through Yoshinaga, passed that thing through, but [in] the house, we were getting a lot of problems. And then Hiram Kamaka was the finance chairman those days. And Hiram said, no, they cannot set aside that kind of money. It's too much. So [Governor Burns' assistant] Don Horio got involved. And Don Horio was the liaison between the governor and Hiram. And Hiram had a big, big respect for the governor, you know. So finally Don said, "I guess we've got to get the governor call the guy."

"Okay."

So the governor told Hiram [to] see what he could—the governor will never say, "Please do it." He'll just say, "I hope you can see what you can do about it, if you can." He'll never take advantage of his friends like that. But just a call from him, you know.

So finally, Don told me, "Pundy, we've got to compromise, because Hiram is sticking his neck out, because basically the committee don't care for it. So he got to push it through."

So I said, "Okay. So what we do?"

He said, "Just go down to 1 percent."

"Well, 1-1/4 sounds better than 1."

"Ah, come on, Pundy." He said, "You want this thing to survive or what?"

"Go ahead, make it survive."

So that's how we ended at 1 percent. And Don was the basic lobby for us.

MK: How much of that lobbying to get the senate support and house support did you have to do personally?

MY: Not much, because Yoshinaga was a genius. This guy, you know, he manipulat(es) politically. And he knew that this would be a plus. And he was really supportive of the arts. So I didn't have to bother. He did all of the maneuvering. We didn't have to go see anybody else. So the house, we left it the same way with Hiram. But Hiram had problems with the committee, and he's not a maneuverer like Yoshinaga. So he had to face these people point-blank, whereas Yoshinaga would display maybe thirty important bills like that and get these guys to make up their mind and then shuffle things in there. He was a master at that. He can have a large block of senators opposing a specific bill, and he still passes it. The guy is a genius, you know. It's amazing what he can do. But on the house side [it] was basically Burns, because of his friendship with Kamaka, that got it through.

JR: Do you think there was a lot of opposition to that initially?

MY: Oh yeah, like anything else. One percent, so the guy figure, "What's our annual budget for buildings?"

"Oh, a hundred million."

"One million dollars for art!"

You know, we're talking about—today, you know, thirty years later—not thirty, twenty. Twenty. . . . I think that bill was passed in '67 or '68.

JR: [Nineteen] sixty-seven.

MY: Sixty-seven. You know you're just introducing the arts to Hawai'i, and you want to pass a bill setting aside \$1 million per year. They think it's crazy. Art—even today we argue about art (is) supposed to be universal, right? Today, with the national movement, and we (still) got to convince people. Imagine those days, \$1 million for art. You know what I mean? But again, you see the strength of the governor and then Yoshinaga. And I didn't do any lobbying, nothing. Fred had to go testify, but no lobbying.

JR: What about when the SFCA wanted to move from the governor's office to a more permanent place? I think that was around 1969, 1970. [The SFCA moved from the governor's office to the Department of Budget and Finance in 1970.]

MY: Well, they considered us almost like an experiment in the beginning, so it was under the governor's office. But with the appropriations, the kind of budget we had, they knew it was a permanent agency already. So they put it under the laws that the governor appoints, the senate confirms kind of thing. So that was done. So the first term—actually the first four years—wasn't under that law. It was just under the governor. You know, there's an eight-year law. You cannot serve more than eight years in any commission, right? I served twelve, consecutively, because the first four years was exempt. So that just fit in. (There) wasn't any movement to formalize that thing. It was strictly an acceptance that this is a permanent agency. So they put it under the (same) laws that govern all these permanent groups.

MK: You know, before we leave the Art in State Buildings law, I have one question. Like you're in the development business, and when a state building is being built, developers or builders bid for the building, yeah? And then they figure out the budget. When you know that 1 percent of all the costs is going to go towards art, where does that 1 percent actually come from? I mean, who really bears the cost? Does the developer, knowing that, build in 1 percent extra or. . .

MY: No, no. We're talking only state buildings.

MK: Yeah, state buildings.

MY: Not private.

MK: Yeah, but developers bid for the right to build, right? Contractors and all that.

MY: Oh. No, it doesn't come from that. They bid just on the project. The 1 percent is separate. The comptroller sets aside 1 percent for us, you know. So let's say, if it's \$100 million, yeah? He set aside 1 million. So the rest is 99 million left. And that's what they bid on.

MK: Oh, okay. So it's set aside real early then?

MY: Well, only in the books, not literally, you know, just by books. But this new law, just last [legislative] session that was passed [Senate Bill 1140]—they have to set aside the 1 percent for us immediately. As soon as they get the funds, 1 percent got to go to us already, immediately. And we have the use of it right away. That was [Representative] Carol Fukunaga who really pushed that through. So it's a great bill for us, whereas before they used to earmark 1 percent for us. Now it's literally transferred in an account for us already.

MK: So from the beginning you get the 1 percent now?

MY: Mm hmm.

JR: You mentioned that---when we were asking you about different lobbying that you—it doesn't sound like you necessarily had to do a lot. What about as chairman, different groups coming to you, lobbying to get funds? You know, coming to you

personally, as the chairman. Do have any comments on that relationship?

MY: Again, we've always handled that through staff. At my time, was Fred Preis. And then today, it's (handled by) all the various specialists we have. And then we have [review] panels for every group, like music, dance, theater, visual arts. We have panelists, and they weigh the requests and they recommend to us. So the state foundation, as such—the members don't decide who gets what. Formally we do, but the recommendation comes from all these panels that we select every year. And the panels are composed of people involved in the arts, some professionals, some lay people, but also involved in that particular area. So we have I don't know how many panels, but we have several panels that do that every year. [In 1988, there were nine Purchases of Service Peer Review Panels.]

JR: You know, we've been talking about the legislature, and they were oftentimes critical of SFCA's spending the 1 percent. How did you, as the board chairman, react to that? And how well do you think the legislature understands what you're trying to do?

MY: The beauty about the state foundation's work is that nobody wants to look stupid. And art is still a strange phenomenon in this society. So the guy want to say something, but he's afraid he might sound stupid. That's the advantage we have. The few of them that come up with some telling kind of criticism. . . . I haven't really, really heard of, let's say, specifically [that] our selection is bad. They'll say, "Oh, terrible that kind of selection." All in general terms, you know, so you cannot answer that. But if somebody comes out specifically and says something, you know, like *Maybe Blue* or whatever. . . . We don't answer it. We just let it go. That's part of the game, that you have to take a few blows. But nothing has developed to be very serious, where they say, "Let's stop the funding because it's all a pile of junk." But the majority think it got to be good. So it's just a small, vocal minority that speaks up. And rather than add fuel to the fire and try to challenge that person, we just stay silent, because the majority still support us. If it becomes critical, then I guess we got to do something about it.

Like one time, [Senator] Duke Kawasaki made a personal vendetta on getting Fred Preis out of office. And then we had a hearing, and this was held in the legislative auditorium. And it was a fairly serious challenge, because they said that the guy is not doing his job, [he's] overpaid for what he's doing, stuff like that. So at that time we asked the art community to come out. So we had about, I would say, close to 300 people out there supporting Fred. And I remember one question that [Senator] Pat Saiki, at that time, (asked). She said, "Okay, we talk about this high, overpaid executive. What is he getting paid?" And I think at that time Fred was getting either \$28,000 or \$32,000 a year. She said, "What? Tell me again." Fred told the figure. She just shook her head, just sat down, because she's involved in private industry, through Amfac and all that, you know. It was a farce.

And Duke Kawasaki tried to defend himself, that he's a lover of art, so he said, "You know, I'm a lover of art. Nothing against art, it's just the way it's being done." He said, "For instance, I have a—you can come to my office, you can see this huge

collection of Japanese art." And that doesn't sit too well [with] 250 (local) artists that sit in the audience, eh, Japanese art, you know. Christ. (Chuckles)

That was the only time we were a little concerned. So [Russell] Davidson—the artist, visual artist—and then his wife, Kay Mura, that two were very, very—how should I say—giving. They spent a lot of times for the state foundation. They were two visual artists. She was a ceramicist. But they really appreciated the efforts of the state foundation. So they always used to come in and help us on little things. On that meeting, they went out and garnered all these people. So I had a meeting with them. I told them, "Fred needs the support, so you've got to—now is the time you've got to bring those people out." So I think there was about 250 artists and about fifty other people. We had about 300 people there. It was very impressive, you know.

MK: You know, with Duke Kawasaki, what was motivating him to go on that kind of attack?

MY: I asked Fred, "What happened with you two guys?"

"Gee, I don't know. He asked me some questions and I answered him."

But Duke said the man is arrogant. So then he stopped me one day and told me, "Fire the guy." Then he went on his one-man investigation. Disrupt the office for I don't know how many days. And I still didn't say anything to him, until the day he met me in this bar. That was the last straw. He just told me, "Why the 'f-ing' hell didn't you fire the guy yet? I'm telling you for the last time you better do it."

So I answered him in a very polite way, my best French, "('F' you)."

(Laughter)

PY: Then war was declared.

JR: And what about the audit, then? I think in seventy---sometime during the '75 session [the legislature] said, "We need an audit of the SFCA." And then in '76 it came out, very critical of a lot of the—especially the board's role.

MY: Well that, I think, hurt us a little bit. But then some of 'em—I was very disappointed in the way they addressed some of these questions and the way they answered it. But it was already done. Nothing we could do with it. And guys like Kawasaki waved that audit on us all the time. But nothing serious developed out of that, as far as crippling the foundation. But there were areas of concern that we have adjusted to, which was good, you know. Some of the criticism, I think, were just. . . . This one lady who made the audit just listened to people and just wrote down what she heard. And she started making assumptions of her own. It was almost biased to the point where the purpose was to find our faults.

But I'm not saying a lot of the criticism wasn't correct. I think a lot of 'em were

correct. We had the freedom—like the way you asked me that question, “What’s [the] extent of my lobbying?” I had great protectors. So maybe we were too loose. You know what I mean? We had that kind of freedom. Like I said, we didn’t have political interference. And the auditing is another form of interference. But we felt so free with it, actually cocky about it. So Fred Preis went his merry way. I went my merry way. In one sense, you could say that’s very healthy that art was protected and was left to the commission to do what they wanted to do, rather than with interference. But on the other hand, because you feel you’re free from being controlled, then you lose some of your (discipline). So I think that’s what the audit really picked up. We were kind of loose.

MK: You know, you talked about being well protected, like you had a political link to Governor Burns and Don Horio. And I noticed that originally you were in the governor’s office, so, again, you had that umbrella of protection, yeah, [for] the SFCA. And then you were moved to [the Department of] Budget and Finance [and finally to the Department of Accounting and General Services]. And that was under—I know the deputy [director] was Mike Tokunaga. And Mike Tokunaga, again, is very closely allied to Burns.

MY: Oh, [one-time comptroller] KeNam Kim, too.

MK: And KeNam Kim.

MY: KeNam was a pal of mine, a drinking buddy, you know. (Chuckles)

MK: So with all those personal and political links. . . .

MY: Mm hmm. It helped. It definitely helped. But the beauty about it is that all the guys (with) political authority didn’t impose anything on us, even as friends or as politicians. That’s the beauty of it. Yoshinaga never said, “Pundy, great. I support you, but I want this program done.” Or, “I want that artist taken care of.” Not once.

MK: Do you think it’s because of all that protection and all those links that people just kind of—hands off?

MY: If Burns won’t tell me what to do, how can another guy tell me what to do? You know what I mean? You get that umbrella. And Yoshinaga, there isn’t a single thing. . . . And you know these legislators, they’re so fierce, those days especially. Now not that bad. They come out in open and criticize people. But those days were so fierce. You take a guy like Elmer Cravalho. The guy, by nature, is suspicious. When they get a bill, it’s almost like a joke. They have (this) big, huge blackboard [for] the Policy Committee, the house Policy Committee. He said, “Okay, senate bill so and so. Sponsor: Nadao Yoshinaga. Purpose: to build a road. Where does the road go? Okay. What is the purpose of the road?”

“Oh, to serve this community to the next community.”

"Okay. What's the development in between here?"

"Private development."

"Who's the beneficiary?"

They go all the way down like that. And so they're always checking on each other, you know. They assume that the state foundation carrying out a program for Yoshinaga or Burns, but nothing come out that they can pinpoint it, because nothing was done. So they kind of feel this is (the) domain of the Yoshinagas and the Burnses, so they kind of lay off. And yet they may feel, at times, [that] they want to approach us. But since they don't see anything they can pinpoint to Yoshinaga, they cannot say, "Eh, you did that for Yoshinaga, so do this for me." You know what I mean? And that's the way you can broke a dam on some of these controls. If they point to you, "Oh, you did this for Yoshinaga. Why can't you do this for me?" You know what I mean? Nothing like that can be ever shown, because it never was done.

If there's any one person that controls these things in selection of which arts or that artist, it was Fred Preis. He had the freedom, you know. And like anything else, I heard criticism among the artists. "Hey, this guy Fred has befriended this particular guy." And that always will be there, but it wasn't political. So that's the beauty about our state foundation, the way it started. You had a governor that was so honorable that other guys couldn't challenge it.

JR: Do you think that the audit changed, then, Preis'—his style or. . . . Because that was one of the main criticisms of the audit, you know, [that] the board was a rubber stamp for Preis.

MY: That's when they had (the audit). I left [the SFCA] just about that time, right after that [in 1978]. And a couple years later [1980], they (wanted to) relieve Preis. And I think that was part of it. He wouldn't change his style. Bea Ranis' group got frustrated with him. In fact, they called me one day. They said, "Pundy, we (can't control this guy)."

I said, "Don't talk to me about things like that. I'm not there anymore. Don't look at me like I'm still part of you, I'm not. This is your business."

Bea is in Honolulu. She was basically more involved than I was, so you get angered more. Where I'm---I get mad at Fred, I tell Fred, "Shape up." [Then] I'm off to Maui, right? And everything cools off. The next time, "Hey! Hi!" you know. So (chuckles) he got away with a lot of things that he couldn't have gotten away with [under another chairman] with me. But I think that was part of it. The members read that [audit], and they feel the man don't change, so they get frustrated.

JR: Other than an occasional phone call, maybe from Bea Ranis, did you have any contact with the foundation during your absence?

MY: No.

JR: [From] '78 on?

MY: I make a point---you know, like when they call me about this issue. I said, "Bea, I'm not part of you. The worst thing I could ever do is give you people advice from the outside, when [I] don't know the total thing, right? I hope you guys can work it out, but don't ask me for advice because I don't know how to give it."

I really believe in that, that if you're still involved in something that is helpful in giving advice, fine. But when you talk about policy, you're talking about what they should do, it's very difficult to—even if no matter how well-meaning—to give good advice. If you're not in the arena and really understanding what (is going on, it's) hard to say from the outside, "No, you guys better not," and all that.

MK: You want to take a break?

JR: Yeah, that might be a good time.

MK: Okay, this might be a good time to stop.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JR: In 1984, you were reappointed to the board. What were the circumstances surrounding that reappointment?

MY: Governor [George] Ariyoshi called me one day. He asked me to serve on the foundation again. And I told him, "No, I'd rather not. I have a couple other recommendations to make from Maui."

He said, "No, well they're getting some problems on the staff and the executive director." So he'd like to have somebody like me, who at least served before, to go in there. Besides, he said—that's one part—but he said he'd also like to feel that I still have interest in the state foundation. So that's how I got reappointed on that.

JR: In one newspaper article, you said that you didn't consider yourself a troubleshooter.

MY: Oh, this was on the executive director thing?

JR: Yeah, yeah, when you were reappointed. Is that what the perception was, though, in the public, or on the part of the governor, or. . . .

MY: I think that was part of the senate hearing we had. [Charles] Toguchi guys wanted

us to resolve this thing. (But there) was a contradiction. I don't know how that statement came out about troubleshooter, but. . . . In one hand, Duke Kawasaki attended one of these meetings. And I wasn't there. The other members were there. He said, "Isn't it the truth that Pundy Yokouchi calls the shots in the state foundation?"

So everybody looked at each other and said, "What do you mean? He's not the chairman."

"Yeah, but in fact isn't he the chairman?"

I understand the rest of the people there said, "Absolutely no. We all share ideas." And they definitely feel I have some experience, so they listen, but I don't call the shots, you know. So they told me about that.

The next meeting that I attended, (Toguchi) said, "Pundy, you got to get more involved in this personnel thing."

I said, "Yeah, but personnel is not something we're supposed to be delving in. There's an area that we can go only so far, otherwise we'll be accused of really administering everything. Whereas ours is a hands-on board, but personnel is a different matter. So we get accused of (meddling). Like the last report I got, one of the senators said, don't I call the shots? "But now you're telling me I should get more involved. So please make up your mind."

"You gotta promise that you guys (are) going (to) get involved to resolve this [personnel] thing."

I said, "We are involved in trying to resolve it, but there's only—to a limit that we can go, because we're the board. We cannot impose (on) personnel things and say, 'You're right, you're wrong,' or whatever."

I don't know how this troubleshooter thing came (about), but probably somebody must have questioned me about my role and maybe I was supposed to resolve this. And I don't see myself in that kind of role, because. . . . The first meeting we had with the staff, they basically just didn't say a single word. I said, "To me, everybody should understand where everybody is coming from. And an executive director is an arm of the foundation. From there, we reach out." They didn't like that. They didn't want anybody to say that Sarah [Richards] is an arm of the foundation. But that's the way it is. So after that I said, "Okay, then what's the problem? Give us some specifics. What's the problem?" They didn't say anything.

And the amazing thing about all this controversy, even till today—nobody said specifically what she did wrong. They say, oh, they cannot trust her. Or, "She contradicts us at times."

"Okay, give us specifics." They won't give you specifics, even till today. So in the end I said—not in that session—I said, "I smell a gang concept over here, you

know, twelve against one." You know what I mean?

JR: This is, maybe, a little farfetched, but I was wondering, in '80, when Preis was leaving, were you ever approached . . .

MY: Yeah, as I mentioned, they called me [about] Fred Preis.

JR: No, I mean called to take his place.

MY: Oh no, no. Never.

JR: Okay.

MY: That's really farfetched.

(Laughter)

MY: I got my own problems here.

JR: Okay. You've been on the board under the three different executive directors. I was wondering if you could compare and contrast the three.

MY: Unfortunately, Sarah didn't get the credit she deserved. I think she did a fine job. I was one of the last holdouts for her. But the mood changes. The pressure on the commission changes, the personnel changes. So in the end, it was almost like a foregone conclusion. She got to go because one should go, rather than twelve. And the twelve were protected by civil service, you know. So finally she was able to get this job from the Hawai'i Theatre. This is not pertinent to the functions of the SFCA, but I kind of stalled the commission from taking any action, knowing that this thing was in the wind. So she got the job. So everything was handled in a more graceful way.

But I was surprised when I got involved back into the state foundation, how things were democratic. Whereas we were under a "dictatorship" earlier. And the biggest fault that the staff aimed at Sarah was she was too dictatorial. And I couldn't understand it. I said, "Did you people work under Fred Preis?"

Had couple that said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah."

"So why you guys squawking?"

"Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right. Yeah."

But they won't answer me. But they'll answer to others. "Oh, she's too dictatorial." After working under Fred Preis—but the majority didn't work under Fred.

(He wasn't actually dictatorial but had immense authority.) And in some of the selection process—like working, picking out a work of art—they used to go viewing together with Fred. And Fred said, "Oh, we'll pick this one." That's it, you know.

Whereas I went couple sessions to select art. And Sarah keeps going back to every member, "Are you satisfied? Do you like that?"

I said, "Sarah, you're getting too democratic. Art cannot be that democratic."

"Well, yeah, yeah. That's right, Pundy. But, you know, I like to get everybody's opinion."

"An opinion is one thing, Sarah, but a vote is something else. You just got to make up your mind."

So the ironic thing about it [is that] here, I find her too democratic, yeah? And she's been accused of being dictatorial. And that's the gist of the complaints by the staff, especially after Fred Preis. I think that's the only unfortunate thing, she wasn't appreciated to the degree she deserved to be, because she did a fine job. And the range of the foundation's work under Sarah was much wider than under Fred. Because now, everybody accepts the foundation. We've just about given grants to everybody. And I really think she did a fine job.

Wendell Silva impressed me a lot. He's a very sensitive, intelligent guy. I've got to praise that selection committee in how they got to him. It wasn't just finding a local guy or anything like that. They really scrutinized some names. So when they recommended Wendell—I wasn't involved—I just went along. But I was really pleasantly surprised about the man's ability.

I really think we had three good directors, and hard to rate them, you know. Like the way I said, Fred's time I gave him that kind of freedom and the protection, politically, so he had that freedom. Whereas Sarah, it was completely the opposite. She didn't have that kind of protection or freedom. And Wendell is still to be tested yet. But the little I saw of him, I'm very impressed. The staff likes him, especially the key people work well with him. He throws things out for their opinion. And yet, he knows what could and should be done kind of guy. So I'm very impressed with him. But I would say the state foundation, basically, has been very fortunate with the kind of people (we've had).

MK: What would you call---if you had to look at all three of them, what would be Preis' primary achievements, Sarah Richards' primary achievements, and I guess for Wendell Silva it's still kind of too early, yeah?

MY: Mm hmm.

MK: But for Preis and Richards.

MY: Preis (had) to explore new grounds. We had to go out and explore new areas.

Whereas my concern was a universal art program, Fred came from the direction, fundamentally, that—he already (was familiar with) some of these groups, so he wanted to improve those groups (which could be sort of elitist). And yet the man (did) identify himself with (the) commoner, too. But nevertheless, after a few (discussions) he really understood the purpose, and then he really carried out that common cause kind of thing. (He was great in carrying out the mission and establishment of the SFCA. No one could have been more effective. And he championed the artist and protected his integrity.)

Sarah came on when they had really established ways of the foundation—the program and all of that. She didn't institute any completely new program, as I see it, but she administered whatever was there very well. In fact, I think [in] a more accountable way than Fred did. She was more precise and was very clear, whereas Fred just did it. That's why the auditor's report—you know, one man just do whatever he wants to do kind of thing. Sarah, I think, is a better administrator, but Fred was a better visionary. So I really think it fit. Sarah came on the time when we were still under the auditor's criticism. And she had to resolve a lot of the stuff, where it wasn't done with Fred. And she did it. Today we're up to date on every part of the report. Yeah, I would rank them like that. Yeah, one a better administrator, the other one a better visionary.

MK: And then, like during Mr. Preis' time, Governor Burns was in office and you were the—you were on the commission, chairman of commission. In Sarah Richards' time, Ariyoshi is in office and sometimes you were on the commission, sometimes you may not have been—I'm not straight on the chronology. But I'm wondering, in terms of the political support the SFCA had during her tenure, how would you compare the two?

MY: Well, they both were hands-off when comes to the actual workings of the foundation. But I would like to think, though, if Sarah's situation—if Burns was there, it wouldn't have developed that badly. But Ariyoshi's a more hands-off guy when (it) comes to personnel. Not his fault either, it just came messy. Then the senators got involved, because the staff—the senators are politicians. They know whose side have more votes, right? So they listen to the staff. They won't call Sarah in a private session, but they'll talk to these guys in a private session, so they bombard the senate. So when we first start(ed) our meeting, you can see where they're coming from already, they're anti-Sarah. I told them, "You guys are totally unfair."

Toguchi told me, "You've got to get more involved, Pundy. If you promise you'll get more involved, we won't put in some of these legislation (correcting or disciplining) the foundation."

I said, "Okay. I'll get more involved. But you guys promise me one thing."

He said, "What's that?"

"That you guys don't listen to all this baloney, you know. Don't make yourself so

accessible, because these guys are going to pound you, and then you guys get caught in a situation you cannot back off from. Then what are we doing? We go there, we tell the staff, 'You do it.' You say, 'You guys got to control these guys.' We're going to say, 'Okay, you guys better accept this and that.' And they run to you and you open the door again. What are we there for?"

He couldn't answer that, because he was honest.

"As long as you guys [i.e., legislators] gonna be accessible to the staff, what chances [do] the executive director have? She's only one person, plus she's a *Haole*," I told him. The votes are local, eh? A lot of these guys, their district, right? I said, "That's totally unfair. But you guys asked me—I should get more involved. I will, if you guys promise to hands-off and just abide by what we decide on."

But I know, politically, they cannot do that. Charlie [Toguchi] left right after that [1987] to [work for] the Department of Education. Then we got more sympathetic people, like [Eloise] Tungpalan. But by that time, the wheels were already in motion, on Sarah. I told them at that time very clearly, "You guys are totally unfair, because—just the fact you guys listening to them. That's unfair already, you know."

MK: How about in terms of funding? Were the legislators more willing to fund the programs under Preis' tenure than in comparison to Sarah Richards' tenure?

MY: I think they were more inclined to fund under Sarah than Fred, as such. But as I said, we had friends. But I was surprised on the expansion of the budgets and some of that understanding of the legislators under Sarah. Because Sarah (possibly) explain(ed) it better than Fred, so they had a better understanding of the foundation.

JR: In the press at least, sometimes it appears that you have Western arts and you have sort of folk, ethnic arts, and somehow they're competing against one another. People said that under Sarah's tenure Western arts were favored, things like this. I was wondering if you could, maybe looking back over the years, compare any changes in attitudes, at least on the SFCA's part, to these different kinds of arts. And maybe on the public's side, also.

MY: Mm hmm. Yeah, maybe there's some reasons for that kind of thinking, because, as I said, we started off with Hawaiian arts, Filipino arts, a lot of these ethnic arts. But the Hawaiian battle has been picked up by their own people now, by all segments of the Hawaiian area, so the foundation can do only so much now. We planted a seed basically. Sarah comes from the opera, the symphony, those areas. And she naturally would try to promote those areas, like the television—what's that program?

JR: "Spectrum [Hawai'i]."

MY: "Spectrum." You know she was criticized on that, too. And same thing, racial. They

said, "That's a *Haole* outfit." I don't buy that. I think it's fundamental. I think (the) symphony got to be protected. How many symphonies do you have? How many cities have symphonies like the Honolulu Symphony? And the society's better for it, because of the symphony. It's unfortunate to brand her like that, but I think. . . . You see, a lot of things happen after the beginning years on the basis of request, not by the commission itself generating the kind of program that should be instituted. It's almost like a tail wagging the dog. We only respond to these requests. So either Hawaiian arts requests more things or the European art requests more things. That's the way you respond.

I don't know what area we could do more, today, than what the groups are doing for the Hawaiian arts. For instance, like hula, you have the Merrie Monarch [Festival]. You know, you can't get tickets, right? It's a sellout. And the competition is so fierce. What every *hālau* spends just for the competition—we cannot go near that kind of stuff, right? So what can we do that can help them? It's very limited. *Hōkūle'a*, they have their own sponsors and whatever else. I think we can take pride that we germinated that seed.

So what else can you do? Probably, if we sit down and just started to promote ideas, maybe something can be developed. And maybe Sarah is partly to blame on the emphasis of the Western arts, because that's what she's acquainted with. But to blame her entirely, I think, again, that's wrong, because a lot of this comes by supply and demand kind of stuff. The guy say, "How's about this?" And we respond.

Like way back, a couple of the senators accused me of being a *Haole* lover, promoting the *Haole* groups. And I think it's essential for the community that the symphony survives, the Honolulu Academy of Arts survives. I'm a trustee of the Honolulu Academy of Arts. I very seldom attend meetings, but I cannot refuse that request either, because it's important to everybody, not just the *Haoles*. The *Haoles* are doing it for everybody. To me, this kind of racial tag is really misleading to the real truth. And then they say, "We don't need a symphony, but we got to get more hula, we got to get more Bayanihan [Philippine Dance Company]," or whatever. That's foolish business to me. (We need it all.)

Just like we don't need a university because our kids not going to the university, so just throw all the money in the high school. Like any society, the top institute leads the way. If you have the University of Hawai'i at this level, the high school got be at this level, elementary school going be this level. But you got the University of Hawai'i up here, everything moves up with the university. That's why I'm a supporter of the University of Hawai'i. At least (the most important) higher-education institution that the state has. The symphony [is the] same way. You got a great symphony, the other guys going fill up in between. Even the jazz band got to measure up to the symphony, you know.

That's the problem. You try to improve one, they get criticized for overemphasizing there. You know what I mean? And I guess that's part of it. But---not to defend Sarah, but I'm sure she has her limitations, too, right? She's exposed to mostly

Western art, and she love the Western arts—the symphony, the ballet, especially the opera. But all of that, to me, is so important.

MK: I was wondering, you know, like when you were growing up, if you had a Japanese *shibai*, or a *Bon* dance, or a *shamisen* play, or a Japanese-type calligraphy, did you consider that art when you were a kid?

MY: No, I didn't. But later on, as I looked. . . . I think there were more performances done prewar—yeah, the Japanese side—than postwar, you know. We're talking about a plantation community. And we used to have these *shibais*—stage plays from Japan—that comes down to our old Nippon Theater in Wailuku, Maui. And my mother used to take me to these things. I was a small kid, and I used to think, oh, some of 'em was pretty good, some of 'em was boring. But every now and then you have all these live shows come in. But today, you get a live show, ho, it's a big thing. That used to be pretty common in that prewar days when we were very, very poor, middle of the Depression. That's a sad thing, though, I noticed. That's why maybe part of that. . . .

You see, earlier, when we started off, Fred Preis had a great idea, in the Governor's Conference [on Culture and the Arts], to have a performance. He said, "We've got to find out what's in our community." That was the idea of the conference. And then for the show, to entertain everybody, he said, "Oh, why don't we have a dance group? Get a Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan, Filipino [to] perform, Korean." So everyone had just a short (program). So we had maybe six, seven groups perform. And I don't know how long that thing was, two hours, two-and-a-half hours, I don't know. But (it) wasn't a marathon, was just real well done. And that's when we had the Washington people [i.e., National Endowment for the Arts representatives] here. They were so impressed, about two years later they brought the show to the Kennedy [Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.], you know, same groups. They were so impressed.

So I guess we had a strong identification of promoting the ethnic arts, right? But then there's only so much we can do for the Nishikawa School, so much we can do for the Nakasone School, only so much for Halla Huhm, stuff like that, right? Only partly, where you'll be given the opportunity to perform [for] a captured group, like the conferees or whatever, or some other occasion. But the actual program—we didn't do much for the Korean arts. We didn't do much for the Japanese arts or the Okinawan arts. I think it's an exaggeration, in a way, when they accuse Sarah of only being Western art.

Except for the Hawaiian art, we have always supported the symphony and. . . . What Fred used to do to help the symphony—they (had) these small ensemble groups. He said, "Let's support that group. Their request is small—maybe \$2,000—but this helps them survive." By surviving, the musician—the symphony can survive. So we used to have a lot of these small programs that's not identified with the symphony, but it's the symphony because these are members of the symphony, you know. And I agree with Fred, that's another way we can help. It's not going to be expensive, and yet it helps the guy, a little bit, to survive as a

musician.

I guess. . . . Like the "Spectrum." When I first got involved, a couple of people stopped me. They told me about that. "Eh, that lady getting carried away only trying to help the 'Spectrum' people. And the other filmmakers in town, she don't even look at them." Then when they get a meeting, the very guys criticizing her vote aye. I'm trying to figure out what's the reasoning for this. There's no real reason. They're just lambasting her, finding things (wrong), you know. So the budget comes up—I forgot what it was, \$37,000 for the "Spectrum"—they all vote aye. So where's the argument? But you hear it on the streets, "Ah, she only taking care of her friends." Baloney, the arguments are there.

MK: I just thought of another question. You know, when the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts had to go to the leg[islature] to lobby for funds, yeah—every two years they have to go and lobby for their funding—sometimes I would be there for different reasons, and I'd see that there'd be all these culture groups there lobbying, like Theatre for Youth, HPAC [Hawai'i Performing Arts Company], Kalihi-Pālana arts council, Wai'anae Coast arts council, the symphony, Bishop Museum. They're all sitting there ready to be heard and to lobby for their funds. Were these individual art groups in competition with SFCA for funding? Was there any sort of conflict because you're going for money from the same trough? And I'm wondering, how does the SFCA deal with that kind of situation?

MY: I doubt if I ever had a discussion like that. Anyway, I wasn't involved in that kind of discussion with the members. But myself, personally, I feel more the merrier. I don't feel that's competition. I feel there's already a clear case of commitment by the state, through the state foundation, already. So all these funds go through our foundation, you know, even though we don't control it. I always believe if you're gonna promote the arts, all these other groups got to be promoted. Although the state foundation grow, we have our limitations, how we reach out. But if the symphony is strong, the theater is strong, all of that helps each other in the end. So that when you have a lobbying effort, let's say for education, you can show these people what is available in that community and why the schools can take advantage of these things. But just going there, just preaching, saying, "You got to do this."

The guys (will) say, "Well, how do we do it? Where's our tools?"

But you get a healthy art community, they can see that, then they can feel that. And then, I think, that's when these things can happen. But we're still far from that yet, real far from it.

So I really feel that---and then the groups you mentioned are all worthwhile groups, because I, in one form or the other, have been involved with them. I know their efforts and their effectiveness. So I don't look at it as competition. I think if the symphony flourish, the academy flourish, and everybody flourish, the state got to say, "Eh, we're gonna make sure the foundation flourish." That's all part of it, you know. But if we get a weak art community, the foundation will be weak, too.

And indirectly they're all advocates of the arts, so they should be advocates for the state foundation, too.

MK: Did the SFCA ever take any efforts to kind of help the lobbying efforts of these individual groups to strengthen these individual groups?

MY: No. We're only asked all the time to respond. So our answers always the same, "Very good." (Chuckles) How can we speak against it? You know what I mean? And Sarah has been going there the most.

"So what do you think of the symphony?"

"Oh, I think it's great."

"Do you think they deserve the money?"

"I think so."

"What about the academy of arts?"

"Well, I think so." What else can we say, right?

(Laughter)

JR: You know, we've been talking about the state funding, what about national? I know the SFCA and various arts groups also get money from the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts]. What about that relationship over the years, and the limitations, say, on national funding during the [Ronald] Reagan years and things like that affecting local programs?

MY: Reagan wasn't successful in instituting his cuts. Congress stopped him. So they still weren't able to (expand), but at least keep it. So we haven't really suffered. That's one of the fortunate things in the Democratic-controlled Congress, right? So, you got to spread the word, keep it there. Otherwise, you get some harebrained idea like Reagan—cut education, cut the arts, right? You know, it's consistent with the mentality. What they said? Do away with the Department of Education, right? Reagan. Yeah, he wanted to do away with the Department of Education—I'm talking the national [Department of Education], right? That was one of his programs. And then every district's supposed to take care their own school, get more involved. That's the answer for schools. [It's] not the national concern. Stupid buggah. He wonder why we falling down. Yeah, thanks to the Democratic Congress we're still there. But we're falling way down, educationally, right? No real national thrust. At least [George] Bush is a little better, but it's far from [John F.] "Jack" Kennedy, for instance, right?

JR: Early on, the link with national organizations—we were talking about the meeting in Chicago and things like that. Has that national direction continued over the years? Or was that just something that started in the sixties and faded out, and

now you're sort of on your own?

MY: I think we still have a special contact with Washington, because Hawai'i is so attractive. They still want to come out here. So even the bureaucrats will come out and listen to us. The beginning years, what we did was—we had a lot of restrictions on travel. And the foundation being so small, I think they used to give me three trips a year, I think, or two, plus one. Yeah, I think three trips a year. Then Fred had about one or two trips. I used to defer all my trips to Fred. I never—except for the national conference I attended a few times, I used to give it all to Fred. [He would] use up all our allotment, because it was so important that he establish direct contact with the bureaucrats that we got to deal with. So he was a well-known guy in Washington, you know, real buddies. They never turned us down flat, ever. They had a good reason whenever they had to turn us down. We had access to these people.

And Sarah, again---she was criticized by the staff of taking too many trips. That's one of the criticism, she used to take too many trips. But the value of the trip is to keep that contact, whether it's in the conference situation or directed to the national endowment. And I know we had couple times we had to freeze our travel, especially just about the middle (period) of our foundation when they limited us maybe to two or three trips total. I used to give all of that to Fred. I believe in that, that he can do a better job than I can. Mine is more public relations, in a sort of limited way, whereas his is real—the relationship with those people is very important.

You know, we had like the first conference [i.e., the Governor's Conference on Culture and the Arts]—Hawai'i is so fortunate. We're so attractive, we can invite anybody and they'll come. Whereas other conferences I'm sure cannot get that kind of people. The people we asked to come, they all came. The national endowment people—Roger Stevens was the chairman, the director [of state and community operations] was Charles Mark—that's the people we wanted. They came, you know. So then, naturally [they were] very supportive. In fact, they were so impressed with what we did—the show and all that—two years later [they] brought 'em up to Kennedy Center. Stuff like that. Constantly, you know, we've been in touch with them. But I was shocked when one of the criticism of Sarah was that the staff said she's taking too many trips. And I don't know how many trips a year she take—maybe five or something like that—but I think that's all part of the job.

JR: What about the general public? I mean, how important do you think it's for them to know what the SFCA does?

MY: I think it's so basic. As I started off in my involvement, right, [I argued] that the arts is for them. And that's one of the toughest thing to communicate, because art is always regarded as a *high makamaka* thing. So the average guy cannot identify himself with it. He doesn't even care. He opens the sport page, but he won't look at the, you know, whatever that concerns art, yeah. So how do you reach that guy? It's a program by itself, the way I look at it. And the state foundation don't have that kind of funds. We need a real good public relations thrust that—it's not just in

spurts, it's got to be a continuing thing. And you got to go on a more disciplined way—by institutions, by institutions—to get them to all understand and support it, before the general public can be surrounded with these things that they cannot help but bump into it. But like I just started off saying earlier, that in one of my speeches I mentioned that the misconception of art is like what education was conceived before, right? It was a luxury, a privilege. It's not a basic function that everybody should be involved with.

Like we're building this center now [i.e., Maui Community Arts and Cultural Center]. The other day we had a groundbreaking. We sent 37,000 newsletters to every household on Maui. I (didn't) like the layout, the way they wrote it. It was too sophisticated, you know. It was too late already. I couldn't stop that thing. But when I saw that layout, I thought, good night, they're not going (to) reach that average Joe Blow with that kind of article. It was too sophisticated, the way it's written. Instead of saying, "This is your center. Come out here and help open it," kind, you know, talk about—I forgot. I don't even want to remember. But too sophisticated. You know what I mean?

So they said, "We got to put some ads in the paper."

I said, "Put 'em in the sport page," I told 'em. You know, gee, Christ.

But that general public understanding [of] the need of the state foundation is far from being there. But at least the so-called common art groups know how important the state foundation is. So they're always requesting grants and all that. So how far will that go? I don't know. We're talking about the general public. It could be a general art population or the general public. If we're talking about the general public, we got a long ways to go. But I think that's needed, because the general public going (to) support education, right? And [if] they can perceive art as education, then someday we'll get it in the schools the way it's supposed to.

JR: I think we need to take a short break.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 20-3-1-90; SIDE ONE

MY: I hope (I'm) answering your question. I know I'm kind of deviating at times.

JR: No, no, that's . . .

MK: No, I think you've answered the questions well. This is our list, and we've gone through the whole thing.

JR: Just to sort of wrap things up, I was wondering if you could comment on the future of the SFCA, maybe where you see it heading, future programs, things like that.

MY: Well, on a short term, I'd like to see more important, heroic things done on that 1 percent thing [i.e., Art in Public Places]. We have a lot of things now, you know, but nothing quite really outstanding. We have few outstanding works, but—for instance, some national or international artists' work that need to be exposed in the community. Those take big money, and one of the problems is that if you get 1 percent for a \$10 million building, that's \$100,000. The user is part of the committee that decides what is going to be placed there. They're going to jealously guard that \$100,000. But if you build another \$5 million building, \$50,000 here, \$100,000 there, \$10,000 here. You can never get that heroic figure, let's say \$1 million.

Where do you get that one million [dollars] from? Unless you get a \$100 million building, then you get one million, right? But that's only one object. You want to place that strategically. The only way you can do that, you got to take some money from this \$100,000 here, \$50,000 there. So instead of \$100,000, you say \$50,000. Instead of \$50,000, \$25,000 or whatever it is. [In other words, set aside half of the 1 percent funds to help pay for the \$1 million artwork.] That's going to create a lot of controversy, because the people there represent the community. And they're going to say, "You're taking our money." No matter how good what you want to accomplish, they want to protect their interest first. But that, I think, before I get out of my term—I've been talking about it. They've been kind of waiting for answers, too. I don't have the answers, you know. So I guess the only approach is we've got to bite the bullet, and face the music, and just do it. That's one thing.

The other thing is that we need to create some kind of an advocacy group that doesn't exist today, especially since the Hawai'i Council for [Culture and] the Arts folded. And then there wasn't any real meaningful involvement for any individual to be there, so there's no excitement to be there. But we need a strong advocacy group that can keep lobbying for the state foundation. But more important, that advocacy group got to be able to reach our leaders in instituting these programs in our schools. And I think there's a role for the state foundation in that advocacy for involvement in education, but the state foundation itself cannot be that lobbying group. But we certainly can play a part in that.

I think the greater goal, to me, is art in schools. That's fundamental. You accomplish that, everything else is gonna flow. The next generation's gonna understand the arts better than our generation. So the long term, I think, is we naturally need to keep a strong lobbying effort for the state foundation.

But it's almost treated like a—still today—like a frill. The state foundation exists only on the pleasure of the legislature and the governor. Let's say they have to severely trim back (on expenditures). I think one of the programs that's gonna be trimmed back is the arts. To me, on the long, long run, if you can institute the arts in schools and have strong enough support, and then proponents of the arts in the school, where they cannot take it away, then you're really on your way.

JR: You mentioned art in the schools. About twenty-five years ago the SFCA and DOE [Department of Education] started that program. In twenty-five years those kids

that you initially had contact with [have grown up and] are adults now. Have you noticed, in that time, that you've been reaping the rewards of the seeds that you planted in 1966?

MY: The program we started was so minute, when you're thinking of the total population of the schools. Only a few kids actually were really exposed to it in a way that makes sense. The rest were just—saw the work of whatever or just glimpsed at that Artist-in-[the]-School[s] program. But the few that were involved in the actual program, there's no question. We had a lot of good comments (and results from) them. If it wasn't for the arts, they don't think they'd be here today kind of thing. But we're talking about a very minute population of the school population. That's why I'm more and more convinced this thing works, you know.

MK: I guess this will be our last question. You know, we've been reading about your involvement in Maui Community Arts and Cultural Center. Maybe you can give us some background about that and what you're hoping the center achieves for Maui.

MY: Same thing as I've been talking about, education. The total project gonna cost us about \$25 million, (excluding) the land. So (\$25) million in cash, \$5 million in land. And we need to raise \$10 million from the private sector. When we first started out, we were talking \$5 million. And we had Honolulu people here, friends of ours, to help us, and they all said, "You're crazy. Five million itself in Honolulu is difficult to raise. How are you going to raise that on Maui?"

Then no sooner did they say that, we knew \$5 million was out of the question. We got to go for seven. So they said, "Okay, Pundy. We'll try, but don't put your hopes too high." We're at \$8 million now. We raised our ante up to \$10 million again. I'm confident we're going to raise the last \$2 million, you know.

It's the most exciting charity program on Maui today. Eight million already shows you that. The highest number ever raised in Maui prior to this was \$1 million, for Seabury [Hall] school. So we're going ten times that. To me, it speaks very well [of] the concern people have for the arts. It's a limited group, again—the general public is still really not involved.

But anyway, we started on that project. And the reason why we can justify ten million or twenty-five million is that it (is not) just a frill or a luxury. It's an educational institution that every child and every member, in fact, of this community should be part of, and—I'm starting to get into my speech now. If you look at art and what it can do for a person, it develops the other sensitivities that reading and writing and arithmetic cannot. (People say), "Why should we give you money for the arts, Pundy, when the social services—like the handicapped, or the depressed, or whatever—need that kind of help? That money we can see gonna do some help, whereas art is a frill."

My argument to that is that, "You got to support that [i.e., the social services]. I support that. How many in this community supports that?"

They say, "Too few."

I say, "Okay. Forever and ever we're gonna struggle like this, right?"

They tell, "Yeah."

"Well, what about the society that grows someday [to the extent] that everybody, in one form or the other, support those handicapped and all that? You're talking about utopia, right?"

So they said, "Okay."

"When do you start on utopia? How do you develop utopia?"

They said, "I don't know what you mean? We've got to get money."

"Yeah, money is one thing. A lot of people get money, [but] they don't give money. I know a lot of (millionaires) that don't give (anything), you know. So it's not a question of wealth, it's a question of sensitivity." So I said, "Then can you believe that art develops sensitivity?"

"Oh, I guess so."

"Well, if a guy can listen to Mozart or Beethoven and feel it, and another guy say, 'What the hell kind of junk is that?' And another guy look at this abstract painting, he says, 'Eh, that's terrific work.' And the other guy says, 'For crying out loud,' right? Yeah? Now you get that guy exposed every day, someplace along the way he(s) going (to) say, 'Eh, this *buggah* not bad after all.' Then he look at it again, 'Eh, this is beautiful.' But if the guy develops that part—which generally our society don't today—you think that guy can walk away from a downtrodden, handicapped, poor person? But [for the] primo warrior, the [downtrodden] guy can be crawling and he say, 'Eh, what the hell you crawling for? Get out of my way!' He'd kick 'em out his way, right? Yeah? But a sensitive person gonna look at the guy and say, 'Eh, gee, I better do something about that.'"

And that's what I'm talking about. A society that is sensitive will start learning to care, so not only you and I got to go dig up every year, all society will do that. Maybe that's utopia. But I'm saying one of the answers is art, religion, and other areas, whatever. But the arts—if you're sensitive, how can you just not see that? Because you're sensitive, you see. Because you're sensitive, you can hear, right? So you're gonna see these things. So a society that's sensitive cannot see his fellow human being suffer, whether it's economic, social, or physical. He just cannot see that. He going do something about it. So that's our argument with this fund-raiser.

Then, the other thing, like the Chamber of Commerce, I had one opportunity to talk to them one day because they gave me an award. And I wanted to refuse it. I said, "Until I finish my center, I don't want any recognition."

They said, "Pundy, but you're going to waste 400 people—captured people—that you can preach about the center."

I told, "Okay, I change my mind." So I went out there.

So I told the chamber of people, "You know, you guys are the soul of the community, because you hire our people and you serve our people. That's the purpose of small business. What happens in the community concerns you. And as a businessman, you've got to know where your dollars go, otherwise you don't survive. So what are you doing with your dollars? You're spending a lot of money on negative things."

So they look at me, "What this guy talking about?"

"Crime. What do we spend on crime? A police force, a private security force, judicial system, penal system, attorney's fees, insurance. . . . We're talking billions [of dollars], only in Hawai'i, a year. But what do we spend on the opposite spectrum of behavior of man, the creative side? The guy(s) going (to) lift the ceiling a little bit for you. What do we spend? A pittance compared with (crime). We accept the negative. (In) my days, way, way back, a popular refrain was, 'You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.'" That was a song, you know. So I said, "Think about that."

Maybe this generation not gonna feel the impact of this center, but sure, someplace along the way, it's gonna have an impact. That's the only way we can justify the existence of that center. It's not a luxury. It's not a frill. Sure, we're going to have that luxury, it's gonna have the frill, but the basic thing is education. Hopefully, we can get plays that never happened on Maui before. Treat our people. We're gonna have jazz sessions. We're gonna have all kind of stuff to—common things, folk art, you know. Then we're going to have the really, really fine arts involved—high performances, stuff like that—and that gonna expand our artistic sensitivities. But that's education, too. But it's luxury, too. But the basic thing is education, to me. The exposure that—education might be too stiff a word, but it's the development of a person—awareness, sensitivity. That, to me, is education.

I've seen some (so-called) "dumb" guys—how they speak the English language—but smart, you know. They develop other senses, right? And I've seen some guys speak very well, but dumb things come out. You know what I mean? Like way back, when they had the creation of the Aspen Institute for the Humanities. General Motors [and] all these major corporations, they sent all the top executives there with their wives, and they go there for these seminars and play. But with all the [financial] success (they enjoy), they find something lacking in their executives. Most of them didn't get the time to go through the fine arts, [because] they're so busy educating themselves in what is considered education. So they find that these guys are lacking in the kind of sensitivity that can help them in business.

That's why I think a community arts center is so important. Got to be in the community, cannot just be a farfetched, faraway thing where they got to make it a

special effort to get there. And, again, there's no better way to surround them than by education. Everybody got to go through that, like it or not. So anyway, that's basically what we started here.

MK: And when's it gonna open?

MY: Hopefully, early in (1993). We officially broke ground, but we're probably gonna really, really start in about October (1991). They're negotiating right now and plans are not really finished. So maybe next month we'll have somebody start working on the ground. Then the first stick, maybe about October or something. And then the contractor that we got said that he probably can do it in thirteen, fourteen months, which is really encouraging, you know.

MK: Well, shall we close it unless . . .

JR: No, I think that's good. I think that's good. Thank you.

MK: Mr. Yokouchi, thank you so much for all your time . . .

(Laughter)

MK: . . . and your thoughts.

MY: I had fun doing it. It's fun to recall a lot of this stuff, too.

MK: I think you should come to Honolulu and give a talk.

MY: (Laughs) Well, if there's money there, . . .

MK: You'll come.

MY: . . . I come.

END OF INTERVIEW

**The State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts**

An Oral History

**Center for Oral History
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